THE GOLDEN QUEST

THE AGE OF CONQUEST

1506-1547

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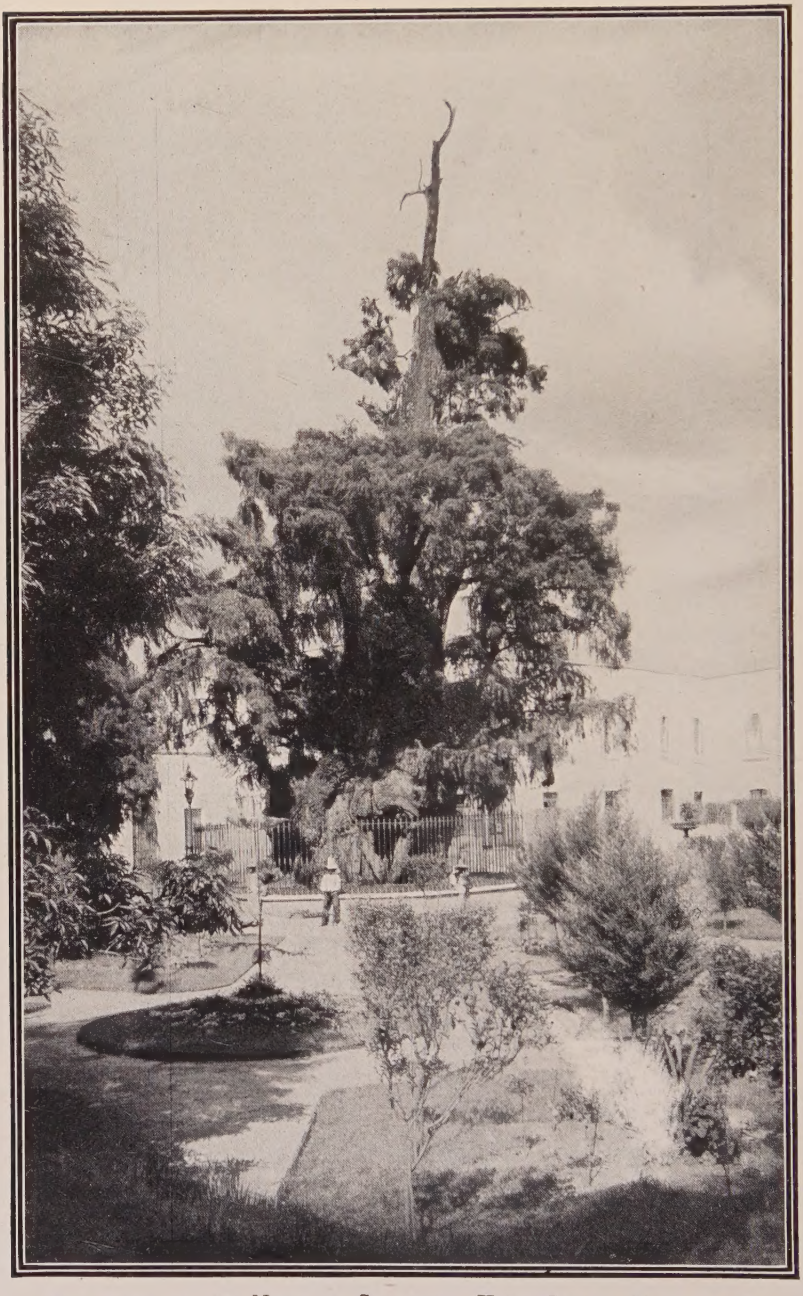

THE TREE OF THE NIGHT OF SORROWS: HERE CORTEZ WEPT AFTER FIGHTING HIS WAY OUT OF MEXICO-TENOCHTITLAN

The Real America in Romance

THE GOLDEN QUEST

THE AGE OF CONQUEST

1506-1547

EDITED BY

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THE GOLDEN QUEST

THE AGE OF CONQUEST

COLUMBUS bequeathed to Europe a New World. But he died not knowing the magnitude of his discoveries. Indeed, it was his countryman, John Cabot, sailing in the service of England, who first gazed upon continental America. Still another Italian, Amerigo Vespucci, was to stamp his name across a hemisphere — a name that the wit of philosophers and the fancy of poets could not have chosen more aptly. For America — the name also survives in the German Emmerich and the English Emery — means the Ruler of Work, the King of Toil.

It was to the great company of Spanish explorers that the task of tracing the dim outline of the double continents fell. And what dazzling names these men have left on the pages of history! Balboa, Cortez, Pizarro, De Soto, Ponce de Leon, and Coronado! True, it was the insatiable thirst for wealth that led men on; but the credit is none the less theirs. From Vespucci's time their vision grew year by year as their quest for riches hastened their feet, now north to Florida and the Mississippi, now south to Columbia and Venezuela, now west to Yucatan, Mexico, and the expanding Pacific, and thence south once more to the golden glory of Peru.

History holds no such chapters as these. The Old World thrust itself upon the New as Greece descended upon Persia, as Rome swept through the nations of antiquity; but with a difference. Through unrecorded ages the two civilizations had grown up apart, each teaching man a measure of his possibilities. In the arts of war, save for horses

and gunpowder, Mexico had nothing to learn from Aragon; in the arts of peace, Castile could have sat at the feet of Peru. But the Persians and the Gauls knew the Greeks and Romans for men; the Mexicans and Peruvians mistook the Spaniards for gods. Before they awakened from their superstitious terrors the deed was done, and two empires were no more.

It is astonishing to reflect upon the enormous widening of her physical horizons Spain underwent without adding an inch to any true breadth of vision. She fixed her eyes with steadfastness upon a golden goal and her gaze, dazzled, swam, and sank, until it fell at her own feet and there remained. From the beginning there was conquest and glory, feats of arms that outrivalled the old paladins, and deeds of splendor and wonder; but there were always tyranny and greed, men enslaved and women who wept. Upon the peoples she discovered she loosed the sweepings of long years of bitter war. She widened the world by half, and narrowed herself.

Twenty republics in the New World hold Spain for their mother country. All were founded in conquest by men led on through lust for gold. To this day a clutch for power characterizes many of their governments, rather than a desire for the happiness of the people. It is not until the English in Virginia learned another lesson, that individual character is recognized as the firmest foundation for a State. For it is not the splendor of a conquestador, but the simple, every-day virtue of a home-builder, upon which the structure of sound government is raised.

Spain grew big, but she did not grow in greatness. Her head was of gold, her feet of clay. She traced the outlines of the Americas, but she traced them with blood and tears. And, like that other empire of old, she, too, has passed, a warning to the world.

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THE AGE OF CONQUEST

CHAPTER I

MEN OF HISPANIOLA

THE golden tropic dawn found the beach at Santo Domingo fairly seething with men and accouterments. The tide had reached its height, and the ships were close in, making the embarkation of the horses as easy as possible. Boatloads of men were going out, too; men with crossbows, arquebusiers, fellows with glinting helmets, and all manner of strange equipments. In every face was the eager light of desire, the flame of the gold-seeker's hope.

HERNANDO CORTEZ

Up and down the beach Commander Ojeda in light armor was riding a black stallion which shrank back from the water, to be as frequently spurred in. Ojeda rode out, splashing and swearing, to inspect each boatload as it shoved off. To the motley crowd along

the shore he from time to time addressed himself. His speech was all of wrath at the slowness of the lading, and of the gold that clogged the rivers of Darien. For this November day, in the year of grace, 1509, was the greatest day in the checkered life of Commander Ojeda; this day he set out for his province, the vast and virgin principality of Darien.

ALONZO DE OJEDA

The sun came up, clear and buoyant, and the level rays gleamed across the spray around the stallion's hoofs. The last boat but one was ready to put off, when a pompous man in black detached himself from the crowd and hailed Ojeda.

"Señor Ojeda," he said, in a sharp, incisive voice, "If you take with you that man, you will be liable for his debts. He is under arrest."

"This is no time for stopping," said the commander. "Cast off."

"I warn you that you are infringing the civil law —"

the man in black shouted, coming down to the water's edge and picking his way along the trodden mud.

Ojeda rode out around the boat and came slowly back, the knees of his horse besprinkling the crew as he passed alongside. Of the crew, no one stirred.

"What man do you claim?" he inquired, testily.

"Vasco Nuñez de Balboa, for debts to Miguel Ponta, vintner, Luis de Santona — " The lawyer began the list of his clients with unction, but Ojeda cut him short. Balboa, disappointed but unruffled, threw his leg over the side of the boat, and there awaited the end of the controversy. Go or stay, his kit was light.

"Pass that," said Ojeda, quickly. "What do you propose?"

"I demand that he be left behind."

For an instant the commander made no reply, but sat wrapped in thought, while the stallion impatiently stamped in the ooze, so that the lawyer withdrew in some haste. A lean, dark man in the boat stood up and addressed Ojeda with insolent familiarity.

"I tell you, Ojeda, we have no time to clear our characters, if we are to save the tide. Balboa is worth ten of these knaves. Let him go."

"Be still, Pizarro. If the man has debts, let him pay them."

"Don't be a fool, Ojeda," Pizarro rejoined coolly. "The Bachelor Enciso paid yours."

The commander wheeled his horse sharply around, and forgetting the man of law, turned on Pizarro. Balboa laughed. "It 's no use, Francisco. Look there. I 'm done for."

Ojeda, seeing that the diversion had been purposely made, drew up angrily and looked back toward the beach. A slight, thin-haired gentleman of middle age approached

from the town, and the crowd made way for him. The lawyer in black turned to him instantly, as one with whom he might deal more safely than with the blustering Ojeda. The little gentleman stood in a proper judicial attitude while the case was stated to him and then addressed the commander.

"Señor Captain Ojeda," he said, crisply, "this is highly irregular. You have no right to take with you debtors, or scoundrels, or improper persons of any sort."

"In that case," Francisco Pizarro remarked, in a dry tone, very like the bachelor's, "we are all discharged." The disputants affected not to hear this, though it gave appreciable satisfaction to the crowd along the shore. Ojeda blustered and persisted. The bachelor was firm in his decision and precise in his directions.

"You have only one course. Put the man ashore."

"Heave him over, then," growled the captain.

"Ojeda, are you under orders from that tottering shyster?" Pizarro flung out in disgust. Balboa leapt out of the boat and waded ashore, a dripping young Hercules, laughing bitterly.

"Pull away," commanded Ojeda.

The barge came in from the ship just then, and Ojeda spurred his horse aboard, swung him around, and bowed with ceremony to the bachelor and the assembled crowd. The native wharf-rats bent lustily to their task, the sunlight glittering along their naked bronze backs, as the barge gathered way. The captain dismounted and stood in a magnificent attitude beside his charger, his plumed hat in hand. The natives splashed back up the beach, and the sweeps took the barge out majestically. It was a fine effect, and no one appreciated it so much as the Commander Ojeda — or so little as his punctilious patron, the bachelor.

The expedition having started in safety, if not in sanctity,

Enciso turned his attention to Balboa, who was already in argument with the lawyer in black. The crowd stayed for the quarrel, taking sides vociferously. Meanwhile Balboa had gained two strong adherents — Hernando Estévan, who loved the careless young giant in spite of his irregularities, and his friend Cortez, who loved him because of them,

Entrance to the Harbor of Santo Domingo

and whose support was weakened by his own audacious disrepute. Upon this discussion the bachelor entered in a double capacity — hearing it as a judge, and arguing for the plaintiff at the same time.

"You acknowledge these debts, young man, you brazenly admit them; yet you try to run away. Your creditors demand only the law's protection. It is known that Governor Nicuesa starts with another expedition in a week. Be reasonable, sir. Your creditors surely have every right to have you locked up until this expedition is gone."

"He has tried to run away once, and he will again,"

the lawyer in black insisted. "He must come with me to the alcalde mayor, and be put where he can not slip off."

"What right have you to lock him up?" Estévan inquired. "He does no crime who goes for money to pay his debts."

"Leave matters of law to those who know them, Señor Estévan," said Enciso, suavely. "He has admitted his debts. It behooves men of position, such as you and me, to see that he is punished."

"Knowing little of law," Cortez threatened, with equal suavity, "I advise you to let him alone. He has ignorant friends who would think nothing of wringing a barrister's neck."

"Let it stand, Hernando," protested Balboa. "It 's not worth fighting over."

"Not worth fighting over — to keep you out of jail! Have you seen the rats in the alcalde prison, and the vermin?" He turned again to the prim little bachelor. "Old man," he jerked out between his teeth, "if my friend ever lodges there, through any work of yours — "

"Señor, señor," cried the man in black, "this is highly irregular. This will never do. Let Balboa get him sureties, and let the matter stand."

"A very proper plan," said Enciso, who had grown nervous under Cortez's reckless gaze. "Let him get sureties who are satisfactory to his creditors."

"I am ready to serve," said Estévan.

"Accepted."

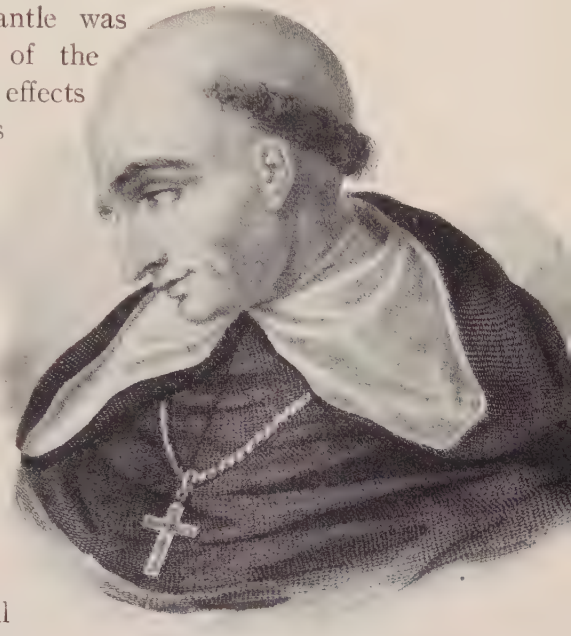
"I will serve," Cortez volunteered.

The attorney was silent. "You need a second surety, Señor Balboa," remarked the bachelor.

There was an awkward pause, and Cortez flushed darkly. A young fellow in a long brown mantle came forward, and spoke shortly to Balboa, looking at him meanwhile with

deep, friendly eyes. The others waited. Balboa seemed to assent to the young man's request, whatever it may have been.

The deep eyes faced the lawyer. "Will you accept my word for him?" asked the newcomer. The advocate hesitated; the brown mantle was none too good, the rest of the man's clothes showed the effects of jungle travel, and his money pouch looked unpromising, being stuffed to the mouth with small books somewhat frayed at the edges. Still, there was an air of reverence and authority about the student. His face was fine and purposeful, and his voice low and sincere as he continued, "My name is Bartholomew de Las Casas." The lawyer still looked at him in doubt. A smile flickered in the dark eyes. "I have a better suit. My only regret is that I am not wearing it."



Bartholomew de Las Casas

Balboa flared up at the hesitation which so affronted his friend, but Las Casas checked him with a gesture, the smile still playing about his lips.

"It is my advice," the bachelor pronounced shortly, "that Señor Las Casas be accepted. You are not like to be offered better security."

With that the matter ended, and the crowd melted away in a twinkling. The beach, a dazzling, sun-washed cres-

cent, lay deserted, and the blue water smiled beyond it, while Ojeda's little fleet slipped out to the southwestern horizon. Brave, unscrupulous, braggart Ojeda — off for his province in Darien, quarreling and chanting about the gold of the Indies, and never a thought for a base of supplies or a means of return. But he meant that there should be no return until he could come in glory, with yellow metal enough to sheathe his ships. Behind him he was leaving the settlement, and Nicuesa, his rival who had striven for the western half of his province; and the Viceroy Don Diego Columbus, whom he hated, and who resented the whole expedition as an intrusion upon his territory and a clear fracture of the King's word; and the punctilious Bachelor Enciso, to whom he owed money, and who continually broke in upon his plans with odd little notions of order and etiquette. Altogether, Ojeda was not sorry to be leaving Hispaniola.

"This expedition of Ojeda's," Cortez observed, in the veranda of Estévan's house that night, "will never come to anything. I cannot fancy the man as a governor. He will talk all the time, and the Indians will steal the iron from his ships. He will let his beggars go gold-hunting before he makes them build houses. He will be at the slave-catching for very laziness, and then the tribes will not sell him food. You are well out of it, Balboa."

"I know all that," Vasco Nuñez returned, "but I would I were with him. He has the great chance open. Here I have only debt and idleness."

"There will be other chances," suggested Estévan.

"Nicuesa, you mean. No, for I can't pay. Besides, I 've promised Las Casas." Balboa paused and looked out over the bay, where the furled sails showed white under the brilliant moon.

Las Casas moved uneasily. "I would not have a friend

CHARLES V (*After the painting by Titian, said by many to be the finest portrait in the World*)

bound in such a matter," he said, quietly. In the pause the hum of insects became audible, and the four men sipped their wine in silence. There was something oppressive in the weight of Balboa's regret, and they all felt it. At length Cortez moved suddenly and set down his glass with a clink.

"*Madre de Dios!*" he exclaimed, with sudden irrelevance, "we are a long way from home." No one answered. The sense of their exile was heavy upon them. He took up the thread of his speech again. "Why are we here?" he asked. "For our own honor and preferment. And how is that to be gained? What does it mean? One thing, my friends, — one thing. Without the favor of the King, you are nothing. Shall this be gained by the building of new towns, the cutting of new roads, even the finding of new lands? No, I tell you, no! Ask of the Viceroy Don Diego Columbus, and he will tell you that all the favor his father left him would not buy him a dinner, save where it is secured by contract. He is a wronged man, you say. But if he were to send back to Spain the gold his father sought? Ah, my friends, that would be another tale." He paused, and the silence enclosed them again.

"You talk like Ojeda," Balboa observed at last.

"True," Cortez admitted. "So far, Ojeda is right. He is not the man to do it, but the thing can be done. Gold you must find, and conquer — gold enough for a King's thirst! We are in the very throat of Cathay, and we do nothing. We wait for orders and authorities. We work out these beggarly mines, and spend ourselves on these deadly plantations. I tell you, the strong hand must seize before it wastes. We sniff the illimitable riches and delights of the East — and touch nothing. Gold, my friends, gold is the word, but it will never pour out without the cutting of the skin — and there behind us is the royal thirst of Spain. I am for fighting, and enriching the glory of Castile."

"And some of us," said Las Casas, in a low voice, "are for carrying the Cross."

"That also I desire, of course," Cortez replied, casually, but the fire had gone out of his speech. Even so, his tirade had aroused them all from their constraint, and they spoke more easily.

"You speak of the King," said Las Casas, "but back of him stands the Church. He may fall, but it endures. Each man for himself, you say. Good. And I take it, each man for his own soul. For what shall it profit a man — you know the lesson. We are four men, friends together. I may speak frankly. We look into the future, and see that there will be, must be, enough of conquest to sate the ambitions of a Cæsar; and in conquest there is little enough of justice. For this gold we must return the joys of salvation, the comforts of the Faith. Each man for his own soul — and here are the countless myriads of the Indian races, all to be persuaded to the Church. Choose your masters, men; I for one am minded to choose the Church. For this is the true Crusade, and from the East we shall win Jerusalem again, and all the world shall be of one communion." He stopped speaking, and in the gloom they saw his eyes a-shine. looking out into the starry night. "Choose your ways, my friends. Deal justly. But of all the opportunities of this new Orient, the chance for salvation is the great one, and the one most men pass by. I had not meant to say these things, but they are much in my heart."

"Each man to his work," Balboa observed, briefly. For a moment they said nothing more, but sat looking out across the distant bay, and into the silver-strewn velvet sky. It was a witching night, a night of confidences, and they all — warm-blooded men — yielded to it. Then, too, there was something in the low ring of Las Casas's voice that stirred them; it was the voice of a man who gives word to his inmost

thought. Estévan broke the hush, and they listened to him in turn, fascinated.

"Each man to his work, as you say. I 've been thinking of that. It has been my work to seek, and wander, and comfort, to the utmost of my strength, the old Admiral Don Christopher — the great Admiral. The Church calls you, Las Casas. You must answer, but that is not my call. The ambition of Castile, the gold-thirst of the King, is your beacon, my Cortez. So. But I confess I am for new islands, untrodden and secret paths, new sea-ways."

"Your work, and mine," said Balboa. Estévan went on:

"The Indies of which Marco Polo wrote still lie in their ancient places; the gold still breaks in streams from their

A Water Carrier of Santo Domingo

rotting silken treasure-sacks. The myriad heathen still bow to their blood-stained altars. But have we found them? Here in this island of Hispaniola have we found them? Will Ojeda come on them in Darien? No, my friends. We must still search. We must find the lands that lie beyond Darien, or northwest from the island of Isabella. Gold, Cortez, gold! He who serves his King must find the Golden Way."

As he ceased speaking they were conscious of a sound behind them, and turning, beheld in the doorway the grave beauty of Christina Estévan. Her eyes were fixed on her husband in a look of agonized rapture. Her lips moved, so that they knew she was saying again his words — "find — the — Golden — Way." She did not speak them aloud. There was a fluttering at her throat, as with one who loses the world and all. It was over in a flash, and she smiled again. But the three men there had seen it, and they had seen the quick leaning of Estévan toward her, and the passing conflict in his face. The three understood, and were confused, as though they had intruded upon an inner life that was too sacred, stumbled upon some secret shrine. Then Cortez moved his hand impatiently as he rose, and his long sword fell clanging from the table in front of him.

"You will pardon me, señors," said Christina, in an odd, light voice. "A gentleman to see Señor Estévan — the Don Juan Ponce de Leon. May I send him to you?"

A tall, soldierly man was the visitor, grey-haired, sunburned with much service in the islands, speaking with a singular ringing voice of great authority. He was known by reputation to all the group, having fought with distinction in Spain before the fall of Granada, and more recently against the hostile natives in Porto Rico, of which island he had been governor. He had come, he said, hearing that Señor

Estévan had traveled much in the Indies, to find out what he could of a matter that concerned him nearly, a quest in which he was engaged. He was glad to find the others present, since they, too, might have information which would aid him.

"There can be no doubt," he said, earnestly, "that we are near to those Oriental lands which are described by the older writers, and that the mysterious secrets of the East must be at hand. Some of you may have heard of a mystical spring, or well, which has most wonderful properties, and which was known to exist in the kingdom of the Great Khan?"

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HOUSE BUILT BY AND CONTAINING THE REMAINS OF PONCE DE LEON, SAN JUAN DE PUERTO RICO

"The *Fons Juventutis*, you mean?" inquired Las Casas.

"The Fountain of Lasting Youth."

"Oh, yes," said Las Casas. "The English traveler, Maundeville, mentions it, does he not?"

"More than that," Ponce de Leon replied solemnly, "he

found it, bathed in it, and was made young again. Is it more wonderful than other works of God? Is it more wonderful than this earth is? I have seen marvels enough in my time — I grow credulous; I begin to be convinced. There is such a spring. Señors, I am minded to find it, or leave my rusty limbs to bleach on the way that leads to it. To die is nought — I have been near to death a thousand times, and never drew back. But to be twice young!" He paused, recovering himself, and speaking with less excitement. "You have dealt with the Indians in many parts, Señor Estévan. Have you heard of this fountain among them?"

"Some such tale I have heard."

"But you never marked it, never sought it out?"

"Never."

The older man sighed heavily, and there was a stillness for a moment.

"We are sorry, señor," Cortez blurted out at last, "but most of us have so much to do in enduring the follies of youth."

Ponce de Leon turned upon him sharply. "Do I not know? You are young, all of you. You hear this marvel, and it touches you not. But to me it is everything — life and the fruit of life — honor and —" He caught himself again, and leaned back, drawing in his breath.

"When I have lived out my life," Cortez observed, coolly, "I trust I shall be ready to let it go."

"I understand you better," said Estévan, in a low voice. "You love, señor. You must find the fountain."

Ponce de Leon bowed, and his breath came heavily. "You can tell me nothing?"

"Only this: The Indians have strange tales, and many of them are lies. But I have heard of a land that lies beyond the Island of Isabella, or Cuba, as the natives call it.

Of that land they tell curious things, but of a certainty we know nothing."

The old knight arose to take his leave, thanking his host, and bidding them a courteous good night. When he was gone they sat thinking again, and somehow Balboa's words came back to them, with the strange persistence of a haunting melody; "Each man to his work — each man to his work."

"In these stars before us," Las Casas remarked at last, "must be written the work and the destiny of every soul. If you shall find gold and conquest, my Cortez; if you, my friends, shall come upon the sea-road to Cathay; and if the Don Ponce de Leon shall find the fountain of his love; and perhaps if I shall find rest for my own soul. We have wasted our time upon geography and the humanities — wasted our time. For me, I shall come some day to the real sciences, and I shall learn astrology."

"You can never pick me a destiny out of that swarming heaven," said Cortez, quietly, "but I will cut out a better one for myself."

CHAPTER II

THE SAILING FOR DARIEN

A WEEK after Ojeda sailed, Governor Nicuesa took out his expedition on the same track. But there was little of ceremony in his sailing; the bailiffs took their hands from his neck, and he set forth — that was all. After this expedition had departed, the pompous advocate

FERRY ON THE RIVER YUQUE, NEAR SANTIAGO, SANTO DOMINGO

in the rusty black cloak relaxed his vigilance, and Balboa went about as he pleased. A little later, on the representation of Estévan that he was about to leave Hispaniola for a time on business, and could not be expected to hold the responsibility in absence, the sureties for Balboa's presence were absolved, and, by some happy chance, were not replaced. This was little enough help, since there was no chance to get away, but it was a comfort to Vasco

Nuñez to know that his friends were not involved in his disastrous affairs.

Then came the news that the Bachelor Enciso would take out a couple of ships and a stock of supplies to Ojeda's colony, wherever that might be, and Balboa took heart again.

Estévan had meant to go on an errand of inspection along the coast of Cuba in the service of Governor Velásquez, the season not demanding his oversight on his plantation, but Balboa's new plans changed that intention in a moment. Then, too, the Governor's growing hostility to the viceroy, Don Diego Columbus, made the friends of the discoverer's faction slow to take service with him. Enciso's expedition promised a short duration, and this won to it the adherence of Christina immediately.

"You will get nothing of the Governor Velásquez, at the best," she argued. "With Señor Balboa, in Darien, who knows? You may find your fortune, my Hernando."

"You may wait long for my return."

"I shall be patient."

For a moment Estévan gazed into his wife's eyes, and knew that in her was a steadfast courage to match his own daring, and a love to sustain his resolution; not all the heroic spirits of the time were fighting men, and the women who spent their lives in the islands or in Spanish homes, waiting, waiting — they, too, had their part in the work of conquest. Christina had now found out clearly what she had long before divined, that Estévan was born to the task of exploration and discovery, and she accepted the condition.

The Bachelor Enciso welcomed Hernando as a volunteer, being somewhat pressed for men whom he considered fit for the work he had in hand. Truth to tell, the bachelor was determined that no man should sail with him who did not satisfy his requirements in character and legal status;

this made the recruiting difficult, since the men of Hispaniola were for the most part fellows of more courage than conscience. Estévan was put to the work of arranging for the embarkation of supplies.

It seemed a favorable chance to put Balboa aboard secretly, but his watchful creditors were too numerous and too apparent. This led to the dubious stratagem of sending him aboard informally in a hogshead, properly drilled with breathing holes, marked, and stowed under Estévan's own direction. The smuggling of a debtor into the bachelor's virtuous crew was a matter for jest, and Hernando breathed his audible disapprobation now and again as he passed the barrel, and heard the guilty thing murmur with Balboa's suppressed laughter.

The bachelor was determined that the start should be made in a most orderly fashion, without any of the ostentation which had marked the sailing of Ojeda; and it must be admitted that the lawyer's talents for organization were better suited to this stage of the journey than to any of the succeeding encounters. Estévan paid no further heed to his embarreled friend after the commander came aboard, but rested on his labors, and stood with Enciso watching the lading of the consort under Martin Orelva.

Here things were not going so smoothly, and the bachelor's face clouded as he eyed the confusion. It may have been due to inefficient handling, but more probably the fact that the commander had chosen the best force for his own ship; at any rate, the accidents of the lading were numerous, and the delay grew serious. Orelva's hoarse orders came across the intervening water, loud and angry, and his movements along the poop-deck became more and more agitated. Things were going badly, and he had little patience for such emergencies. The men under him worked furiously on the barge, but in spite of their efforts two of the

bachelor's horses went into the water. The swell was heavy enough in the bay to make the lading really difficult, but in the mind of the bachelor there was no room for charity; the accidental conditions of nature should not be allowed to interfere with the purposes of man.

The swell was growing more positive. There was a scuffle on the barge, and a clean-limbed white Arab mare

THE PALACE OF CHARLES V

went into the water, throwing off a couple of men in her fear. The fellows scrambled upon the barge again, were ordered on board the ship, and Orelva promptly knocked them down. The mare came up from her plunge, shook the salt from her eyes, and struck out for the beach.

"Señor Estévan," said the bachelor, excitedly, "I command you to take charge of the lading of that ship."

Estévan demurred. "I am sure Orelva can manage it," he said quietly.

The Emperor Charles V

"I must insist," rapped the lawyer, decisively, after the manner of his kind.

"I protest," Estévan ventured, "against displacing such a man as Señor Orelva because of an accident. He will not take it kindly."

The bachelor had no conception of the free discipline which prevailed among the men whom he commanded, and he took any question of his authority as highly irregular. For such reprehensible practices he had but one remedy — to enforce his word. In vain Estévan pleaded that he was needed where he was, since the rising wind might at any moment require them to look to the stowage of their own supplies. This was an unfortunate suggestion, since it led to the very thing he feared; he was sent away from his friend, leaving him with no certainty of escape from the hogshead, and the bachelor with a nervous idea that the cargo might need closer attention.

By noon they cast off and stood out to sea, Estévan tormented with forebodings about Vasco Nuñez, Orelva injured and humiliated to the heart, Balboa cramped and numb in his prison, and the bachelor growing paler and more miserable with every swing of the rising waves.

Hernando had cautiously stowed the precious cask in the run of the ship, where he might have access to it at any time; but to make provision for accident, Balboa had a knife to whittle away the central strip of the head, so that he could remove it from within, and thus slide out the entire end of the barrel piecemeal, — a tedious expedient of doubtful utility. The stowaway was dimly conscious of the ship's movement, but when she reached the open sea he aroused himself, and began to listen intently, thinking it nearly time for his release.

Time passed slowly, interminably, and no signal came, no friendly hand upon the rim of his retreat. The size of the space permitted a little movement, slight changes of position which offered momentary relief; but no actual rest. The little blur of light that filtered through his breathing holes grew fainter and disappeared, and with it the air grew more stifling than before. The light once gone, the close-

ness of the atmosphere seemed to grow apace. Soon after the last of it vanished he heard sounds of movement in the run, a ghostly glimmer of yellow in the breathing holes, and something was deposited heavily on top of the hogshead.

With this sound, which he could not understand, came no signal knock, no welcome crash of liberating blows over his head. There was more shifting and murmuring in the lazarette, but he could make nothing of it, nor could he catch the words of the orders. The work, whatever it may have been, once completed, a throbbing silence enveloped him more closely than his wooden walls.

A dozen times he started and resolved to call out, but each time he checked himself. There might be an escort of some sort, he feared, and Estévan might be waiting for it to return. At last he could bear it no longer, and he called softly. His voice rang in the narrow circle, and was smothered in the oaken cell like the cries of a drowning man far under. For a moment he waited and listened, and when he tried again his speech went hollow, and the groan filled his own ear more dismally than the demand he had meant it to be.

He thought of the knife, and his fingers trembled as he drew it. A single cut at the hard wood of the head, and he sank back, overcome for the moment with a dizzy fear. Again he waited.

There was a tremble of the floor, like the sound of steps. He listened, and would have shouted, but the vibration slid into the steady creaking of the ship's timbers, and he heard nothing more to make him believe in the possibility of rescue. In a sudden access of madness at the thought, he cried out wildly, and attacked the staves and head of the cask with unutterable fury. The sullen wood splintered here and there, but yielded nothing. A glancing upward blow did something unlooked-for, however; it split away a piece

of a stave next to the groove, and the split, by some chance waywardness of the grain, went through to the end of the piece. In this desperate, lucky stroke the knife snapped, and Balboa was left with a stub of a blade in his hand. With this, as with a hammer, he belabored the roof above him, and with each impulsion of his great arm the barrel trembled. His breath grew short — unbearably short, and he paused, trembling.

Then, as he fumbled along the head, he drew breath again with a sharp intake of joy. The central strip yielded. Working it frantically, however, he found that it would not move more than its own thickness upward. He spun it around, and discovered that egress through the opening was closed. In the re-stowing of the cargo another cask had been set upon his.

He tried to lift it, working through the space he had cleared. Gathering all his strength for a great upheaval, he set himself to the task; it stirred, but was again blocked on the instant: the height of the run would admit two casks, but without space between them. He was lifting against the very timbers of the ship.

Realizing this, he fell back, and set to work removing what was left of the head. This came easily enough, and he paused, thinking he heard a cry of fear from without. But the blood was pounding so in his own ears that he could gather nothing definite. One thing remained to be done, and he nerved himself to the task. The barrel above must be moved aside. Failing this, there was danger that it might be wedged still more tightly, and so all hope of escape shut off. The upper cask was of slightly smaller size, and its rim fitted into the lower, locking the staves. The thing had to be lifted off. There was no other way.

Turning his cramped limbs, now hot and moist with fighting, he set his shoulder to the boards above him; a

mighty surge of hope came up in his heart as the thing stirred aside from its place. He knew now that it was not lashed down. The rolling of the ship aided him, and inch by inch, upholding the weight of the hogshead steadily, he turned it around and shifted it aside. There came a great lurch of the ship. The cask toppled, the rim of the barrel below gave way, and the hoops and staves fell about him as he rose and heaved the burden from him.

Blinking as he stood, shaken to the very life and clinging to the beams for support, he saw at the stairway two men; one of them held a lantern and a crucifix, and was praying volubly; the other clung to the railing, wide-eyed and pallid. The one with the lantern was the chaplain. The sick man with the wide eyes was the Bachelor Enciso. In the rolling of the ship the lantern swung to and fro, and rattled against the priest's swinging rosary. The prayer was an exorcism against devils.

"*Maria Sanctissima!* It 's a man," exclaimed the bachelor.

"Vasco Nuñez — God bless you," said the chaplain.

"I beg to offer you my services," said Balboa.

The bachelor sat down heavily on the cabin stair. His eyes roved about the run, his hands twitched, and his thin grey locks stood out from his head in mute, disordered evidence of the fright from which he was beginning to recover, and the seasickness which still held him. Still, he was not one to yield in the presence of his duty. Fear and illness might torment him, but the bachelor's firm soul was so entwined and bound with the red tape of the law that it persisted in the face of discomfiting circumstance.

"You are known to me, Vasco Nuñez de Balboa, for an absconding debtor. Such a man would breed disrespect for law among my people. You have proved yourself a knave." Balboa drew himself up, and his face burned under the tirade

RUINS OF OLD PANAMA (*From a recent photograph*)

of studied insult, coldly set forth like a legal brief, which followed. The older man paused, arose unsteadily, and leaned forward, his eyes glittering. "You beg to offer — sir," he said sharply, "you beg to offer me your services, Señor Stowaway; I reject them."

Balboa took a step forward. Enciso stood firm, and a look of defiance came into his face. The priest moved to interpose.

"What am I to do?" the young man asked, checking his rage with an effort.

"What you will," said the bachelor. "You may be off in your barrel, or I will set you ashore on the first island we touch."

"That would be murder," exclaimed Vasco Nuñez.

"It would be nothing of the sort," answered the man of law. "I am acting quite within my rights."

With that the angry bachelor turned and went up the companionway, his white lips compressed, and his head wagging. The priest followed him, protesting, and Vasco Nuñez was left alone. A little later the pilot came down with a lantern, and accompanied him forward, where he was made as comfortable as possible among the men. That night the chaplain pleaded his cause without obtaining any assurance of yielding from the bachelor. The next day they waited for the consort, and Estévan came aboard. His arguments presented the case in a different light; Balboa's strength and ability, and his knowledge of the country they were about to visit, all made it evident that he was a valuable recruit. Enciso was not a cruel man, as men went, but he could not bring himself to forgive the illegal and undisciplined manner of Balboa's enlistment. At last, he grudgingly admitted that he had no alternative but to accept his services, though he was wont to ascribe any infraction of discipline to the fright the men had suffered through the barrel episode.

The task on which the expedition set out was one requiring the most flexible and resourceful leadership. Bachelor Enciso had in him no quality which met the conditions. Such blood of adventure as may have run in his youthful veins had long ago dried up; he was unyielding and positive, punctilious and exact; his voice crackled like an ancient parchment. He was all for conducting the work of the cruise on what he called proper and legitimate lines.

Francisco de Pizarro

It was with a view to the orderly purchase of supplies that he put into the bay of misfortune where the settlement of Carthagena had stood. It was here that he met a strange brigantine — a ship which had also stood in with the idea of securing provisions, but whose crew had not, among them all, a proper or legitimate notion of anything. The brigantine came in at sunset, and the bachelor at once set out in a boat to greet her. Estévan and Balboa went with him.

To the orderly signal from Enciso's pilot the only

response was a mumbled growl from the lookout, a lean man whose shirt hung from his skeleton shoulders in rags and ribbons. In a moment another face appeared beside the lookout, a bearded face, not quite so cadaverous, in which Balboa recognized with a start the countenance of his former friend, Francisco Pizarro.

"Who is in command of this ship?" asked Enciso.

"I am," replied Pizarro, insolently.

The bachelor turned to Estévan. "These fellows sailed with Ojeda. Now we find them here — a very irregular proceeding. This man was a common sailor. The appearance of mutiny and insubordination is complete. I find it my duty to arrest them and inflict upon them the penalties of the law."

Pizarro leaned over the rail, watching the lawyer with narrowed eyes. At length he spoke. "Have you any fruit aboard?" he inquired. "We have need of fruit for our sick."

"By whose authority do you command this ship?" the bachelor inquired, coldly.

Pizarro flared up at the question. "I command in the name of the Governor Ojeda, whose lieutenant I am. By whose authority do you ask?"

Enciso was not getting on well with his arrest. He forthwith enumerated his suspicions at length, and ended by assuring the angry Pizarro that he was about to be taken into custody.

"You propose to arrest me, señor. Your speech is long and foolish. You grow old, bachelor. Why should you arrest me? Is it to take away my ship?" The lean captain spoke with a scorn too deep for any mere outburst of anger to express. He paused, and his slit-like eyes fixed the little grey man as if with lances.

"It is my duty to arrest you," the bachelor answered

stoutly, "because you are here with a ship that does not belong to you. You can show me no authority."

Pizarro drew forth from his pouch a soiled bit of parchment, turned it about and eyed it curiously, and finally thrust his sheath-knife through it.

"My commission," he remarked briefly, and with a deft movement spun the knife through the air. The bachelor dodged, and the blade struck and quivered in the seat beside him, the fluttering parchment still impaled upon it. The lawyer withdrew the knife, and glanced at the script.

"This is not executed in due form," he observed, "but it bears Ojeda's signature. I will let it pass. Now, señor, why have you deserted our colony?"

A red flush burned on Pizarro's cheeks, and his eyes glanced for a moment at the good ships, lying at anchor in the silent bay. His gaze came back to the bachelor's face, and his voice cut the air sharply.

"Our colony! I have deserted nothing, señor. I have brought with me all that remains of your colony. Do you know what that means? Listen. Ojeda was our captain. Under his loving hand we died by scores and were still faithful. The fever airs of the swamp blew us down like leaves. The brown devils of the forest poured their poisoned arrows upon us. We walked out of our stockade, and death stung us from every thicket. We stayed within our walls, and died like flies. Of what, señor? I will tell you. Of hunger."

The bachelor's face blenched, but he listened like one fascinated.

"You have not known these things, old man. Hunger will make you a grey wolf. The green jungle will crawl with living fear around you. You will not endure it long, señor. Why have we left your colony? Because we obeyed our commander. I love not the tale, but you asked for it, and I will not spare you."

"Proceed with your report," said the bachelor.

"Ojeda left us, sailed with old Talevera for help and supplies, and ordered us to wait fifty days. There were two hundred of us then — two hundred out of the six hundred. We waited. The fifty days went by, and there were seventy of us left. We killed our horses for meat, and salted them

A Native Hut in Central America

with sea-water. We sailed in the two brigantines, this and another. The other foundered at sea.

"You see me with one man on deck. Why is that? There are but nine sound men on board, and we watch by turns, and nurse the sick between watches. I have brought you back a ship and nine men, señor. We have lived in that charnel pest-house, we have endured with the damned. We have obeyed, señor, and there are nine of us left. I ask you for fruit for my sick, and you say my commission is not

executed in due form. God's blood! Señor, I do not know why I have let you live so long."

For a moment Enciso was still. Then in a tremulous voice he spoke, and they all knew that the sufferings of the man before them had reached even to his dried-up heart.

"I humble myself before you, Señor Pizarro," he said, earnestly. "I have been in error. Estévan, go you aboard this ship with all necessary supplies, and do all that can be done for the relief of her crew."

"There is but one relief possible," said Pizarro. "Give us men and let us be on our way back to Hispaniola. We are done for."

"No," answered the bachelor. "I cannot abandon the expedition. You shall have rest and comfort here. As soon as possible, we shall sail for Darien."

"You will not give me a crew and let me go?" Pizarro inquired in a hard voice.

"It is quite impossible," Enciso answered, recovering his accustomed tone. "I must be about the business of the colony." With that he signaled to be taken back to his ship. In a few minutes the boat returned with Estévan and Balboa, bringing the first load of supplies. They found Francisco Pizarro still standing where they had left him, his narrow eyes hot with undying anger, and his face set like a mask of hate.

CHAPTER III

THE STOWAWAY A MAGISTRATE

ABUNDANT time remained, after the meeting with Pizarro in the harbor of Carthagena, for alterations in the plan of the expedition. In this matter of changed conditions the bachelor found himself at a disadvantage. He had started with the idea of joining and assisting Ojeda; and here, before he even approached the scene of his labors, he found that Ojeda had vanished. To the others, and especially to ready men like Estévan and Balboa, this made little difference. They were willing to accommodate themselves to the new order, if, indeed, they did not actually prefer it.

GATE OF THE CITADEL AT SANTO DOMINGO

So it was with the approval of all the experienced officers that Balboa proposed that the colony be located upon the west coast of the Gulf of Uraba. The argument, which gained in point by the terrible experiences of Pizarro, was that along that coast the poisoned arrow was unknown to the natives. Enciso, in duty bound to weigh such a recommendation carefully, submitted it to a general conference, and the west coast was unanimously chosen. By this decision, though he knew it not, the bachelor delivered

himself bound and helpless into the hands of his opponents. Possibly Vasco Nuñez did not at the time realize how deep a tactical blunder the man of law had committed; but certainly he was first to take advantage of it, and to proclaim it openly.

The landing was made easily enough, and for the nucleus of the colony an Indian village, riven away from its owners

PANAMA, FOUNDED BY PEDRARIAS IN 1519 (*From an early print*)

while the huts still stood and the cooking smoke had scarcely drifted away from the evening fires, was summarily appropriated. But the village of Chief Zemaco could give only the first and simplest rudiments of a town for the uses of the colony. In the month that followed they labored fiercely in the forest, cut timbers, dressed them, quarried stone, dug wells, and made the scattering group of huts into the King's City of Santa Maria del Darien.

It was work like this that sifted out the men of the colony; work of head and hands, where each man was matched against his neighbor, and yet all toiled for the common good. It was this time of trial that set Vasco Nuñez so high in the regard of all. He not only did his share, and more than this for the good of the settlement; but he found time and strength for another task by no means simple: he set forth among the neighboring tribes, and by his force and firmness, as well as by his tact and patience, won the Indians to him. In after times, when other men came with new injustices, this friendship was lost to the Spaniards; but by the time this happened, the work was done, the foothold secured.

There was bickering enough in the colony, and hard words, and every man in authority had need of infinite tact — a quality not to be found in the Bachelor Enciso. He conducted his office as alcalde mayor as strictly and literally as though he had been delivering judgments in some sleepy old village of Andalusia.

It chanced that Francisco Pizarro was brought before him in a matter of the division of gold from a trading expedition, some dispute having arisen among the men who had gone out under Pizarro's leadership. In the presence of a considerable number of the colonists the bachelor delivered sentence, and added to it some slighting words about the defendant. The occasion was of little consequence, and nothing would have come of it, save that it followed on a long succession of petty tyrannies.

Pizarro bowed beneath the reproof, but his face showed how deeply it had stung him. Balboa, more confident of the bachelor's inherent justice, protested vigorously.

"Your Excellency," he said with candor, "does not understand this matter at all. Of all gold acquired we must give the Crown one-fifth; this Pizarro has done.

Beyond that, the question is merely one of the correctness of the reckoning."

There was a silence following his words, and a sort of unrest filled the room; the session of the mayor's court was being held in the evening, by torchlight, that the work of the colony might not be interrupted, and most of the important men of the settlement were present. The torches wavered and flared; the sounds of the tropic night came in through the open windows; the audience shuffled uneasily. At last the bachelor spoke.

"The court orders," he said slowly, "that Vasco Nuñez de Balboa be confined for three days for insubordination." The order struck the room into sudden clamor. Everywhere men growled and shook their heads, and some even cried out against the decree. Balboa stood up on a bench and stilled the tumult.

"I refuse to submit to the decree," he said, calmly. "The governor exceeds his authority."

The bachelor fell into the trap. To enforce his word was simple; to justify himself was insane.

"You are refusing to submit to the authority of the King," he cried. "The Governor Ojeda holds his commission by royal writ, and I hold under him."

"In that case," answered the triumphant Balboa, "your authority here is sheer usurpation; Ojeda's province extends to the center of the Gulf of Uraba. We are on the west shore. As Ojeda's lieutenant you have no office here."

Balboa's mine was sprung. Uproar filled the court-room, and from it spread into the streets. The town was madly at argument in an instant. When the argument subsided, the bachelor was deposed. The next morning found Vasco Nuñez, fleeing debtor, the stowaway from the cask, *de facto* governor of Darien. The first of the endless line of central American revolutions was accomplished without bloodshed.

The authority of Balboa, however, extended no further than his election to temporary office as alcalde mayor. The actual governorship was agreed to rest with Nicuesa, wherever he might be; and during the following week Colmenares set out with a ship to look for him.

Ancient Bridge in Old Panama

This expedition of Colmenares was brought to a melancholy issue: he did in truth succeed in finding Nicuesa at the port of Nombre de Dios. He found, too, some seventy men left of the promising colony which had gone out the year before. Nicuesa, the smiling gentleman of fortune, was dried and shriveled to a skeleton; ragged, unkempt, the very children of misery, his followers had fallen around him, and the wretched few that were left alive were spending their slight remaining strength in languid, fruitless quarrels and

insurrections. Poor Nicuesa! The inhospitable shores had given him a terrible welcome, and he had been broken under it. His once generous soul had grown lean and hungry like his body, and an unspeakable hardness had taken the place of his easy and courteous temper. Colmenares lamented the change in him as though it had been the translation of death itself.

At the message they brought him, however, the unfortunate gentleman snapped like a hungry beast. There was a strong and successful colony in his domain? "Good!" he cried, "let me hasten to its possession.

"Have they found gold at Santa Maria del Darien?" he asked of Colmenares, and learning that some little of the metal had been picked up by trading parties, he at once planned to send it to Spain, and so rehabilitate his declining favor. To this Colmenares made no reply, but reported it to the men of Darien when his caravel arrived, a few hours ahead of Nicuesa's. This report Balboa made no effort to conceal, knowing in his ambitious heart that it would be fatal to the claims of the new governor. When Nicuesa arrived, a delegation of the settlers met his caravel in a boat, and desired of him a statement of his intentions, as governor of the colony. For this delegation Francisco Pizarro was, by his own appointment, the spokesman. Balboa knew nothing of it.

"We are come to welcome his Excellency, the Governor Nicuesa, to his city of Santa Maria," Pizarro announced when they came within hail of the caravel, which had just dropped anchor in the bay.

To this Nicuesa made a speech in response, thanking them for their loyalty, and assuring them of his happiness in arriving among them. Pizarro then stood up in the boat, and, prompted by Bachelor Carrol, set forth the demands of the colony.

A Tropical Forest Monarch

"Your Excellency, we have suffered much, and labored much for this town of ours. We have set aside the authority of Bachelor Enciso, who usurped your place. We have chosen Vasco Nuñez de Balboa to command in your absence, and through his labors we have come by what we have. Suffer us now loyally to inquire your will. We have, individually, acquired certain property, at great risk and effort of our bodies. Do you now assure us that we shall be protected in our earnings ?"

"Men and Spaniards," said Nicuesa, sternly, "you have not suffered for this province more than I, and what we have done is in the King's name. I shall deal justice under my commission, standing in the King's place over you. Private property shall be protected. But gold, taken by intercourse with the heathen natives, is the right and appanage of the King."

"In that case," said Bachelor Carrol, "we impugn your commission."

"We regret, Excellency," Pizarro remarked, coldly, "that we cannot let you come ashore — now, or hereafter."

With that they rowed back, set guards along the coast, trained guns on Nicuesa's caravel, and returned to the plaza, where a meeting of the settlers was held. Here Bachelor Carrol set forth the feelings of the people, and Bachelor Enciso, appearing for the first time since his deposition, appealed to them, since they would not receive Nicuesa, to return him to authority, lest the colony fall into lawlessness. It was a stormy conference, and lasted far into the night. When it was over, the decree went forth that Enciso should be imprisoned, and that Nicuesa should be given a ship and sent away. There were a few scattering adherents to Enciso, and seventeen who held by Nicuesa, most of them men who had known him in happier days; but the colony as a whole was overwhelmingly in favor of Balboa.

Vasco Nuñez looked upon it all with mingled feelings; he greatly desired to lead the colony, since he looked upon it as his appointed work, the flower of his ambition. The two claimants were of little consequence to him, for he was not the man to hold the bachelor's petty tyrannies against him, now that his own position was so altered; and Nicuesa he had never known. But the success of the town was all in all to him, and he knew it was best assured in his hands. Expediency made a right to the authority he had assumed, and the task before them was one which, by its very nature, placed the rough wisdom of expediency above the blind counsels of the King's advisers beyond the seas.

Ancient Gate and City Wall of Santo Domingo

For the rejected men the verdict was harsh enough. Nicuesa, maddened by his treatment and raving against the traitors who had refused him allegiance, put to sea with his seventeen followers, their curses ringing in the night. So they vanished, and Darien saw them no more. They never reached Hispaniola, and their wrongs were never laid at the feet of the King. Only silence followed them, and their bark, freighted with its load of hatred, found in some green seaway inglorious doom.

Enciso, left to whatever disposition Balboa might choose to make of him, fared better. Vasco Nuñez could

not find it in his heart to keep the man imprisoned, in spite of Estévan's repeated warnings that to release him would loose a force for dissension in the colony. Once set free, however, the bachelor did not tarry for further dealings with the men of Darien. He gathered his resources, purchased the services of the fastest ship in the bay, and sailed for Spain.

"My friend," Estévan said to Balboa, when he heard of this, "do you know that the bachelor has gone to put you under an attainder of treason?"

Vasco Nuñez only smiled. "I know it," he said, "and I have not been idle. I have given letters to Zamudio, who is my good friend, and I am making my report against him. My word is as good as his."

"That notion," said Estévan, dejectedly, "will soon go up in a puff of smoke. You may have done a great work here, but he is a barrister, trained to speak in high places."

"You forget," Balboa remarked, dryly, "I sent with Zamudio the royal fifth share of gold. That, too, is trained to speak in high places."

Nombre de Dios

CHAPTER IV

A BATTLE AND A GREETING

THE relations established by Balboa with the Indians, while friendly enough in the end, were not consummated without fighting. The colony was frequently reduced to forcible bargaining with the natives for food, and exploring parties suffered from the hostility of the more distant tribes. The part taken by the powerful young commander was, however, a part more subtle and enduring than that of mere force. He never fought with a tribe that he did not conquer; never conquered that he did not form an alliance with the defeated party. Thus he surrounded the town with an ever-widening area of native allies, many of whom had felt the Spanish steel, none of whom were foolhardy enough to risk a second conflict.

To work out such a policy, in the absence of any recognized central government among the Indians, required delicate manœuvering as well as courage; but so important did Balboa consider it that he set himself to learn something of the native tongue, employing an Indian boy in his household as his instructor. The progress he made was necessarily slow, but even a few words of greeting were of the utmost value to him.

Yet it was not until his expedition into the Coyba country, when he led a party against Chief Careta, that the worth of this laborious effort became really apparent; on that expedition he gained an interpreter — and far more than an interpreter, as it proved — who brought him into speech with the forest people after a deeper fashion, and made the beat of the wilderness heart as familiar to him as his own.

Careta, chief of the Coyba tribe, had given a brusk welcome to three fellows from the colony; of the three, only two returned from their expedition, and as they had come all the way through friendly territory, Balboa never really knew the truth of the third man's end; the two did not agree in their stories, but both seemed to bear ill will against Careta,

A Jungle Stream in Panama

and one of them accused him directly of making away with their comrade. Also they agreed that Careta lived in a good house, had a fine village, and that he probably concealed gold. Balboa had little patience with the men, knowing them for useless rogues; but the occasion offered an expedition, and he set out, taking with him a party of twenty-five men, with three bloodhounds — one of them the terrible Leoncico, a beast more dreaded by the natives than a score of soldiers. Estévan went with the party, and he questioned the fellows who complained of Careta more

closely, being convinced that there was something in reserve that might account for the variation in their stories. But he got nothing for his pains, beyond a hastily smothered reference to an Indian girl who was somehow concerned, and to whom the Spaniard referred as "the maid." The party started early, and marched rapidly. Balboa was bent

A Palm Forest in central America

on decisive action, and Estévan thought he had more information than he confided to his men.

The road was clear for the most part, and through friendly districts, so that the party was well entertained on the way. Vasco Nuñez was reasonably sure that he had made a close approach to Careta's village before any word went before them. Fast marching was part of his system. The afternoon of the third day, however, they were met by a messenger from Careta, and an hour afterward came to the chief himself, ceremoniously welcoming them to one of his lesser villages.

On a string around his neck the chief wore, ostentatiously, a ring of Spanish workmanship, a ring with a seal. Lest it should not be noticed, he touched it now and then with his finger as he talked.

Balboa progressed well, as he supposed, with his negotiations; they slept in the village that night, and everything was quiet: but early in the morning the sentry awoke Estévan, saying some movement was afoot in the village. Vasco Nuñez was next aroused, and he ordered an instant investigation. They sallied out in the dawn, and behold, the village was as empty and silent as the forest itself. Returning to their quarters, Balboa met an Indian, a young man whom he had not before seen, who held up his hand for conference, after the manner of his people.

The interpreter delivered his message. "My master," he said, "the high Cacique Careta, does not trust the white men." Only this, and a leathern packet, in which Balboa found the ring with the seal. When they looked about for the messenger, after the packet was opened, he had vanished as mysteriously as he appeared. They gave the scent of the ground where he had stood to the hound Leoncico, but it only led them to a brawling stream roaring in the near-by thicket.

Then followed one of Balboa's wonderful forced marches. The chief, he was sure, had retired to his stronghold, and would expect a night attack. The guides were trusty, and the party fresh. Noon found them within striking distance. Mid-afternoon, and in spite of the moist sultriness of the jungle and the difficulties of the way, they were approaching the village from below, not following the path which wound around the hills and into the open fields. This way, Balboa was certain, they would strike from an unaccustomed quarter, and at an unexpected hour.

At an opening of the jungle he divided his party, taking

with him two men only, and making his way along the edge of the wood for a distance equal perhaps to twice the length of the village. The instructions were to attack in half an hour, and Estévan, with the main party, was to take Careta alive, if possible.

Screened by the thick foliage, Vasco Nuñez watched for the attack, and meanwhile examined the village with the utmost attention. It was built under the edge of a low-browed hill, and along the nether slope, extending in either direction from the thatched roofs of the little town, were well-kept fields, the grain just beginning to tinge the earth with living green. The houses were the best the Spaniards had seen in Darien, larger and better wrought than any along the coast. In the fields nearest the town a few women were bending over their tillage, but it was plain that the tribe was on the watch, and that no risks were being taken by working the more distant clearings.

Everything lay still and peaceful; the sun-washed village gleamed in the light; the sky was of molten turquoise; the only sound the humming of insects in the thicket and the low crooning of the hound. Then from the edge of the forest came a flicker of lights on steel, and Estévan's party appeared, marching in close order, silently, upon the town. For a long moment the march continued, and no sign came from the village; the scene was quiet as a dream; the Spaniards came within range of the huts — nearer, nearer, and still no answering movement from the defenders.

"Strange," muttered Balboa. "Not even an arrow."

Even as he spoke, the change happened. No head appeared, but the village suddenly streamed with missiles; light javelins, which failed to reach, and thin, feathered arrows that focused their flight on a point among the morions. The first sound that reached the waiting commander was a scream of pain, and the attacking party opened out swiftly

The Tropical Growth of Yucatan

to avoid the death struggles of the two hounds. Not a man fell.

The two dogs lay writhing in the dust. Estévan and his men went on. Not until they disappeared behind the first long row of huts did the thunder of the arquebuses break forth. Almost upon the instant, the scene changed. The wind blew the clouds of white smoke back over the hill, and through its clinging veil Balboa discerned the scattering fugitives who were driven from the upper edge of the town; he could see, too, that these few were for the most part women, and that the tribe had not yet given up the fight. A moment more, and the space between the huts was filled with brown bodies, and the vista was thronged, like the stage in a play, with confused men and fighting. The chief was falling back upon the second row of huts.

The wind changed, and for a moment the roar was masked from the observers. When the air cleared again, Balboa knew that the fighting was near its end. The relentless battle had driven its way through the village, and Careta's faithful warriors were facing the Spaniards from the last wall. "Now," said Balboa, under his breath, and his companions, watching for an instant when the firing had ceased, loosed their shots from the cover of the dense leafage. The effect was immediate. The Indians, believing themselves surrounded, broke and scattered.

The firing ceased, and the fleeing people poured out of the village by scores. Balboa, still watchful, held his place, hoping to see whether or not the chief was taken.

Men and women streamed past him into the jungle, mad with fear. The hound strained at his leash, but Vasco Nuñez would not let him go. There was no need, he knew, for slaughter. Only Careta must be taken. The spectacle fascinated him; never before, in all his expeditions, had he been out of the riot and uproar; never had the game played

itself out for him like this. His comrades rushed forth and joined the party, unconscious that their captain was not with them. Still he kept his place, and spoke soothingly to the fevered, growling beast beside him.

He noted, among the fugitives who came toward him, a slender girl in a garment of white doe-skin, who ran swiftly, uttering no outcry. She did not see him until she was close to the thicket, but when she did, running almost into his arms, she swerved, with a quick leap and a gasp, and plunged into the jungle. On her arms his keen eyes had caught the glitter of golden bracelets. As she passed them, the hound Leoncico leaped for her, and the leash slipped from Balboa's hand. Instantly Vasco Nuñez gave chase.

The girl followed a known path. For the dog, no path was needed; he plowed through the undergrowth as if it had been paper. The man, struggling in his wake, encumbered with steel, was at the greatest disadvantage. Only the trailing leash, which here and there snapped and twined itself around saplings, deterred the beast. This, and the fortunate proximity of the stream, were in the girl's favor. Reaching the water, she ran lightly across a line of slippery stones and tussocks, following a trail which she evidently knew well. The hound leapt for the first stone, slipped, and fell. The water was swift, and deep enough to compel his swimming; from this, she gained an instant.

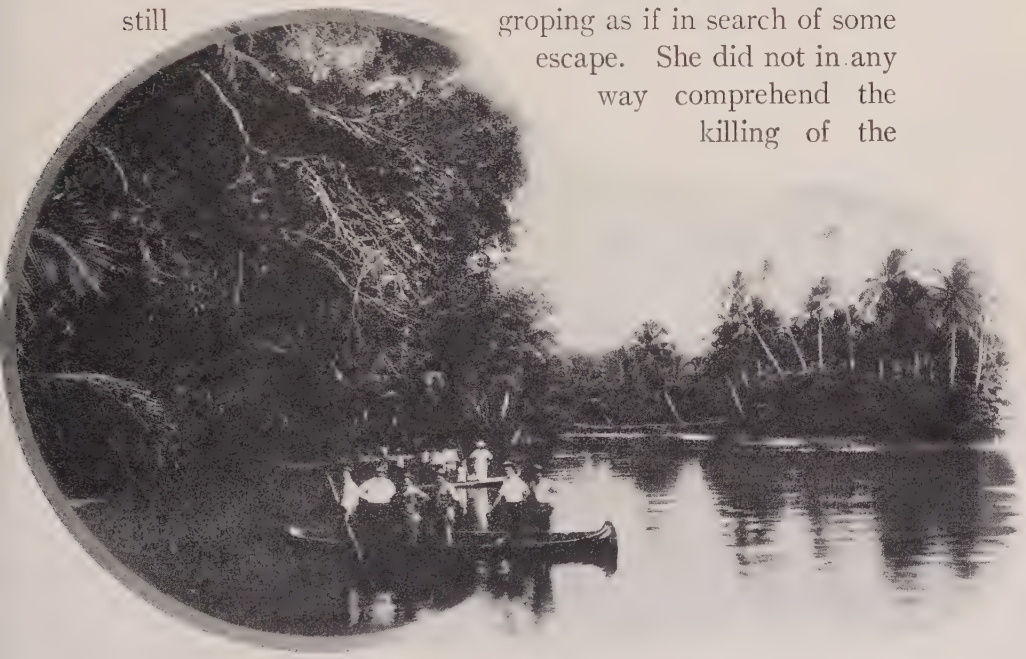
Balboa, seeing the trail, missed it by the slipperiness of the stone. Falling in the water, as it chanced, he did not lose his balance, but rushed on, in water reaching his waist, and gained the shore ahead of the dog. His sword was in his hand, but he forebore to strike. Instead, he ordered the brute to stop, and clutched again at the leash. That instant's hesitation nearly cost a precious life. Leoncico was up and in pursuit again on the instant. In the thick of the

foliage Balboa lost sight of him, but still struggled on, and in another moment he met the sight he feared.

In the clear space under a great tree, whose branches swept downward weeping to the ground, the girl was kneeling, her doe-skin kirtle caught up over her left arm, at bay. She had tripped on a projecting root, and had not succeeded in recovering herself. Even as Vasco Nuñez broke from the thicket, the hound was upon her.

She went down under his rushing weight, but in falling she managed to strike with the protected arm across his jaws. He snapped, and his teeth met in the rawhide. Again his fangs closed, and this time the arm was caught as well; her lithe strength, and the incredible speed of her movement shielding her throat from his gripe. As the cruel teeth took hold, Balboa's sword reached the beast's neck, and he was flung back, sprawling, his blood streaming out over the white doe-skin.

The girl looked up at the armed stranger, her eyes still lit with fear, her breath shaking her deep bosom, her hands still groping as if in search of some escape. She did not in any way comprehend the killing of the



Afloat at Nombre de Dios

hound. And back of her shrinking from the man there was another feeling — a chill of the memory, an agony of the soul. She did not try to rise, but watched Balboa with a desperate scrutiny. He was silent, waiting. The sunlight filtered down in round dots, coins of red and gleaming white, upon her fringed skirt.

Her gaze settled at last — settled, keen and fearful, on the hand that held his sword. Then he noticed for the first time the ring he had received from Careta's messenger that morning, the ring with the seal. He had put it on his finger for the want of a safer place to carry it. After a moment she put out her hand with a child-like gesture, touched the seal, and shuddered back, showing her beautiful teeth with a grimace of primal hatred.

Balboa took off the ring, and dropped it to the ground at her feet. She drew her scarlet-stained kirtle away from it, catching her breath.

"Greeting," said he, kindly, using the Indian tongue.

At the word her face changed and lighted. Her lips trembled and moved, but she did not answer. Long afterward he remembered her so — the bloom, the grace, the pristine witchery of her. He spoke the native formula of peace, and she flung her arms about his knees, weeping; he leaned over her, and gently brushed back her long black hair, that was near to staining itself in the blood of the hound Leoncico.

So this was their first meeting, and out of this moment of peril and fear sprang their strange and deathless love.

CHAPTER V

BALBOA HEARS OF THE GOLDEN WAY

ESTÉVAN, meanwhile, had succeeded completely in his attack upon the village. He had taken Careta and all his principal men prisoners; little damage had been done to the village, no fires had been set, and the new crops were uninjured. A few natives had been wounded, but when the smoke cleared away, and the battle noises ceased, he found that the loss of life had been slight. For a time, after the prisoners were brought together under guard, there was an uneasy dread among the Spaniards over the disappearance of the commander, and Estévan ordered search to be made.

CATHARINE OF ARAGON, FIRST QUEEN OF HENRY VIII

Before this could be done, however, Balboa reappeared, bringing with him the maid from the woods. In the movements following, Estévan was as much in the dark as any one, and as thoroughly amazed at what he saw. He knew that Balboa had some knowledge of the Indian language, and had seen treaties made before with lesser chieftains. But to find his captain returning from the forest with an Indian princess, disheveled and bloodstained; to see the evil and angry curse of battle wiped out in reunion

and glad tears; to observe the consummation of an alliance with the most powerful tribe of the south coast; and lastly to behold a Spanish gentleman, adventurer though he might be, united in tribal marriage with the daughter of a barbarian chief, amid strange dances and rites no European had ever witnessed before: surely a mad night for Vasco Nuñez and his followers, and a strange day's work for Estévan, his friend. But Estévan was one who could understand, and so approve; and that was more than the padre who accompanied the party could bring himself to do.

This marriage, sudden and unforeseen as it was, changed Balboa's attitude toward the Indians, and completely transformed their feelings toward his colony. Careta's daughter, whose original name was never easy to Spanish lips, came to be known as Fulvia. However swift in its inception, her love for him never altered, and throughout his life he showed for her the same exalted affection that made a sacrament of their pagan wedding, the sweet uplifting of passion which so moved Estévan when the twain came out of the forest together.

Fulvia put an end to his study of the Indian tongue, for she learned Spanish quickly, and being always at his side, she interpreted everything for him, much to the dissatisfaction of his youthful body-servant, who thus found himself set aside. Her influence, however, went far beyond the casual translation of messages and treaties. Careta was a man of great consequence along the south coast, and all information that came to him came in due time to Balboa. The little colony was in a fair way to becoming a protective empire, and Vasco Nuñez, while his hold upon the colonists was precarious enough, rapidly became a mighty power among the natives.

His expedition to the country of Comogre, in the mountain district beyond Coyba, was the direct result of an

invitation received through Fulvia; from it came his first real triumph as an explorer, and the first hint of the mighty future of the Darien colony.

Not all Balboa's explorations had been successful; the hopeful journey to the Dobayba country, in search of the fabled Golden Temple, had ended in disappointment and disaster. But the trip to Comogre's town, aside from the usual difficulties of wilderness travel, was filled with new wonders and delights. At the boundary of his province the cacique met the party, and led them, accompanied by his seven sons and a great retinue of his people, back to his capital.

Here was no jungle invasion, no fighting and subsequent peace-making. The party came into Comogre's territory as honored guests, and their entertainment was such as the cacique deemed worthy of the white men's governor and Careta's son-in-law. To the eyes of the Spaniards, the house of the mountain chief was a revelation; not a thatched hut, but a firmly built dwelling, set upon squared log foundations, surrounded by a heavy wall of cut stone, and roofed with fitted timbers and sun-baked tile. Its size, too, was far in excess of any building they had seen in Darien; a hundred and fifty paces in length, and eighty paces in width. The more they saw of this house, the more assured were they that the track to Asia had at last been reached. Surely such magnificence betokened the neighborhood of the realms of the Grand Khan, and the true riches of the Indies. Gold, too, they saw in abundance, since every person of Comogre's household was decorated with trinkets of it.

Pizarro was for an immediate raid upon the town, and the confiscation of all the metal they could lay hands upon. "I tell you, Balboa," he said, "if you let slip this chance, you may never get another. It mislikes me to think we

may yet have to fight our way up yonder trail, just because you will not seize what is under your very fingers."

"Have our hosts not fed you well, Francisco?" Vasco Nuñez inquired dryly.

"So well," rejoined Francisco, "that my blood is up, and my mood for — serving the King — shall we say? We could send his Majesty twenty thousand crowns from this village, and not go bare ourselves; we could make ourselves popular in Spain, Vasco Nuñez. But you will be for treaties, and friendships with these heathen men. I know. Your sentiments do you honor, but they bear heavily on your friends. For what do you hope in this policy? What gain? What credit?"

FULVIA, CARETA, AND BALBOA (*From the drawing by F. A. Carter*)

"By Heaven, Pizarro," broke in Estévan, thoroughly angered by the man's brutality, "you can hope for small

credit for your sentiments. Policy, you say? Can you see nothing over an armlet or two of gold?"

"Peace, Estévan!" said Balboa, calmly. "I will tell you, Francisco. I hope to find the way into the kingdoms of the East. I make this chief my friend, because he is one of the guardians of that way. His treasures are nothing, mere penny-feathers, to the treasures I seek beyond his kingdom. But do I know the way? Do you know it? No. I am not blind in this. I have had signs and tokens. I can wait."

As he spoke, a messenger came to say that Chief Comogre's eldest son would speak with the Spanish captain in the courtyard of the house; Pizarro and the others trooped out with him, and Fulvia joined them immediately, to interpret the interview.

"My father," the young man began, formally, "has welcomed the great captain to his house; he desires that the captain shall be in all things his friend. He sends me to him with this gift." He held aloft one hand, and a troop of slaves, young and vigorous men and girls, not serfs bred and born, but captives taken in war, filed out and made their obeisance to the Spanish leader.

"A sign!" growled Pizarro. "A chief who can afford to give threescore of young slaves. What would you?"

Balboa thanked the chief's son in magniloquent terms. The youth again raised his hand, and four more slaves came forward, bearing baskets covered with gay cloths.

"My father, the high Cacique Comogre, learning that such gifts are pleasing to the white men, sends this also," said the youth; at that the cloths were removed: the sunlight leapt into the uncovered vessels, and the contents blazed and glittered; hoops and rings, armlets, cups, images, and many curious ornaments and devices; gold — more

gold than the eager adventurers had ever seen, filled the baskets to overflowing.

For this also Vasco Nuñez thanked the chief's son, but the sounding phrases came not so easily as before; this gift shook him from his wonted composure, being so sudden confirmation of his wildest hopes. The gleam of the polished metal shone around on the avid faces of his men and in Pizarro's narrow eyes he read a hunger that no hospitality could ever quench.

But the advantage of the moment was not to be lost. He chose out the smallest basket, which appeared to be about one-fifth of the mass, and accepted it specifically in the name of his master, the King of Spain. He then directed that Estévan and Colmenares should distribute the remainder justly among the men. Moving aside with Fulvia and the young donor, Balboa questioned him keenly, hoping to gain from him some knowledge of the district, and of the tribes lying beyond the mountains. The chief's son had traveled more than any native he had met up to that time, and seemed well informed about the geography of the land, as well as about the peoples which inhabited it. But the Spaniard's curiosity was continually balked by that of the Indian, which frequently broke in, child-fashion, to inquire about the colony, the weapons, the habits, and all manner of details of the country whence the white men came. Their conference might have continued long without advantage but for an uproar in the courtyard, where the division of the gold was in progress.

Going to quiet the disturbance, Balboa found his host's son still at his side, his black eyes wild with wonder.

"Can it be true," said the Indian, "that such beings quarrel about this stuff?" He struck the scales contemptuously with his hand, and the trinkets showered in the white dust of the courtyard. "Why do you not go where it is

On the Coast of Yucatan

common, and get your fill?" Fulvia translated his words, and at their import the crowd grew still, and listened as if some spell had been laid upon them. Balboa tried to explain to the native the purchasing power of gold in Spain, and its use as a medium of exchange, but the youth could not understand. In fact, this was not strange, since Fulvia herself had never been clear on the subject, though she understood the metal to be greatly sought, in order that her lord and husband might have credit with his King. At her explanations, however, Comogre's son only shook his head.

"Tell him," said Pizarro, impatiently, "that our King can eat nothing else, and that he sends us for it lest he starve."

She looked to Balboa for confirmation, and he nodded. She translated the words to the Indian, and they watched the effect with the utmost attention. The young man straightened himself with a gracious gesture and spoke to Vasco Nuñez formally, like a herald.

"My father, who is a great chieftain, sends greeting to your King, who is above his mighty captain. We are his brothers, being royal in blood. We will do what we may for his infirmity, since it is like to the hunger of the southern gods, to whom only this metal is grateful."

With that he told them a tale as strange as their own, and to every scrap of it, as it was interpreted, phrase by phrase, they listened. He told them of a great water that washed the shores beyond the mountains of the south; of a kingdom beyond the water, and of the wealth of the kingdom. He told them of ships, larger than any war canoes of the northern tribes; of swift streams that ripple across beds of gold to the sea; of kings who ate and drank from dishes of gold, because it was better than dishes of clay, and as plentiful.

HENRY VIII OF ENGLAND

Vasco Nuñez questioned him closely. There was no doubt in the mind of any man present that the youth was speaking truly. He told them further of the way to the golden land; of the chiefs through whose dominions it led; of the mountains that lay between, and lastly, he vowed his own willingness to go, and his father's to send warriors with them. When he had done, Vasco Nuñez looked around

upon his followers, and they were, one and all, mad with a smothered fire of conquest.

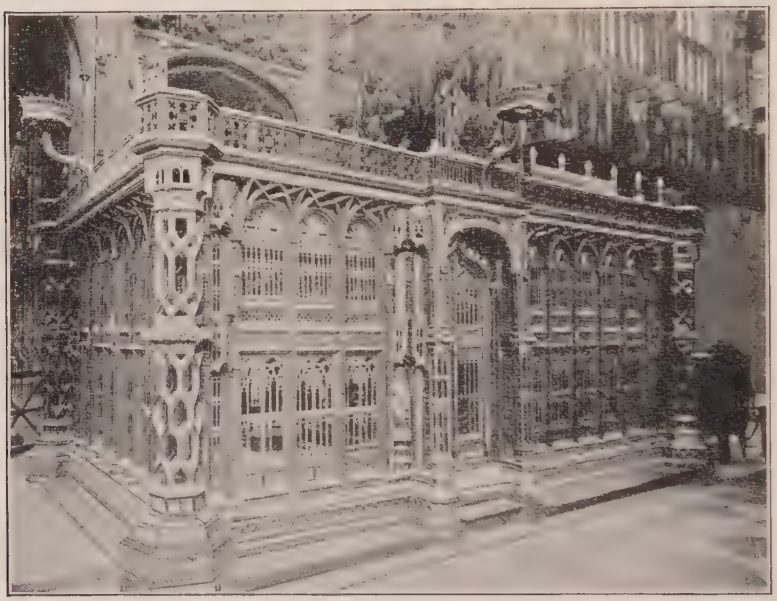
"My friends," he said, solemnly, "we have heard of the Golden Way. We are in the doorway of the East. Swear to me now, man for man, that you will be silent of this until the time shall come to speak. And I swear to you in return, that when I go to this golden kingdom, every man now here shall be as a brother, and not one of you shall be left behind."

Solemnly they took the pledge he required, and then, the grip of the idea loosing its intensity in wild laughter, they went back to the division of the gold. But there was no more quarreling about it; so sure were they of the new conquest, that the three baskets of trinkets seemed scarcely worth the trouble of weighing.

Back in Santa Maria, the next month, however, the Golden Way looked longer and more difficult. Balboa sent the King's share of Comogre's gift, with requests for a thousand men to conquer the southern kingdom; the King's proportion was 15,000 crowns — a fair bid for favor from a monarch who had more men than money. And if this gift had reached its destination, the story of Vasco Nuñez might have been far different from the tragic tale the fates decreed.

In Santa Maria, in spite of the leaking of the news, there were discontent and insubordination. Time and again the fact that the governor was acting without authority was flung in his teeth, though no one dared to lead an actual insurrection. The wildest spirit among them, Francisco Pizarro, was tied by the oath in Comogre's courtyard, or his friendship for Balboa might not have held his impatient hand. Francisco was for invading the golden land with the few men available, holding that to wait for reinforcements was merely to lessen the share of each man.

Months went by, and no news from Spain. Balboa had sent private letters to Don Diego Columbus, at Hispaniola, and had some hopes from him as well as from the King. His tenure of authority was stretched to the breaking point when a ship from San Domingo arrived. On board were letters for Vasco Nuñez. The first was to tell him, secretly, that the Bachelor Enciso had the King's ear, and that legal



The Tomb of Henry VIII

proceedings had been started against him; nay, more, that his life itself was threatened in a suit which was to establish his treachery to the Crown. This, and no word of the receipt of the gold; no word that his letters of hope and loyalty had ever reached the King. A black hour for Balboa, when he spelled out this message.

Incidentally, and by way of news, word was sent him of the marriage of Catharine of Aragon, daughter of Ferdinand and Isabella, to Henry VIII, who had just succeeded to the Crown of England. Catharine was widow of Arthur,

prince of Wales, Henry's brother, and it was the attempt to annul her second marriage which led to the breach between England and the Church of Rome.

In the last packet he opened, he found a commission appointing him governor of Darien, signed by Don Diego Columbus, as viceroy of the Indies. Estévan was with him when he broke the seal.

"A great word for us," he sighed, in hopeless rage. "Don Diego has no authority —"

"Silence," said Vasco Nuñez, quickly. "It will save our province; it will open the Golden Way."

"What shall you do with it?" asked Estévan.

"I will flaunt it in Pizarro's face. I will claim the colony by it. The seal is plain enough. Who needs to know it is not the King's seal?"

CHAPTER VI

THE OCEAN-FINDER

AFTER the arrival of his commission from Don Diego, there was little reason for delaying the journey to the Golden Kingdom. Vasco Nuñez could muster only 200 men ready for the march; and he had small confidence in the offer of help from Comogre. Then, too, Comogre's country lay too far out of the direct route, and it seemed more readily possible to march up the pass from Coyba, and to make terms with Quarequa, the chief whose domain lay in the direction of the South Sea. A thousand men Balboa needed — and even so, to attack an empire with a thousand was madness. Two hundred he had — and the news from Spain threatened. So he started, relying on the muskets, the horses, and the bloodhounds to make up the lack in numbers.

He might have waited, of course. The game was great enough. But Vasco Nuñez had never been confident of help or favor from across the ocean; Spain was too far, and too much infested with lawyers and men seeking preferment. Hispaniola was nearer, but lacked the wealth, the authority, and the men. Don Diego might send him an illegal commission, just to show his good will; but a thousand men — never.

So Balboa took his little force, and plunged into the wilderness. This was early in September. Meanwhile the rumor of the great news had filtered through secret channels to the Spanish court. It came just as the army which Gonsalvo de Cordova had collected for the war in Italy was disbanded, and out of this army a great number of reckless

fellows, set on fire by the mere hint of the speech of Comogre's heir, sought passage for Darien. Balboa, knowing nothing of this, was the better off. It boded him no good.

From Coyba, where the party landed, Vasco Nuñez crossed the domain of Careta and entered that of Quarequa. As guides he had some young men of Careta's, including Fulvia's elder brother. They encountered no opposition the first day of the journey, and the narrow pass between the hills that led into Quarequa's valley was traversed in safety. The guides, however, were not confident of the peaceful intentions of the mountain chief; this, Balboa attributed to the timidity of the Indians in a strange land.

Balboa Ascending the Mountains

The march was slow over the rugged country, and each mile of it seemed to wear heavily upon the Indian slaves who went along as carriers. They had entered Quarequa's coun-

try, and seen no sign of the chief; a day — two days — three days — and still no sign. They were working up the range, and the peaks grew hourly more accessible; surely the ascent was easy — the guardians of the way were asleep. But on the afternoon of the third day they found the cacique at home.

All that day the trail had been clearly marked, open, and much trodden, as though the road were in common use; yet they met no one; not even a hunter on the way home, or a tribesman coming from the fields. The trail was fresh, and broad, and the guides had never seen it before. Fulvia's brother was for returning. There must be, he said, some trap laid along a new way like that. It was not the Indian's habit to make open roads through the forest where narrow trails would serve.

"If it is a trap," said Vasco Nuñez, "then we are like to meet the trapper. Forward."

In a place where the road wound suddenly out of the jungle — a place chosen and prepared for battle, this word of Balboa's proved itself. The road opened at the foot of a treeless hill, and stopped there. This hill, bare of timber, was forested with javelins; and from it the arrows flew thick as the leaves of autumn.

The carriers broke and fled, pellmell, into the wood; and everywhere they were cut down by the lurking foe; the jungle behind the Spaniards swarmed with Quarequa's men. That the battle came as a surprise, Balboa took to his own shame. But the native scouts, driven in by the haunting fear of the strange road and the silent forest, had failed him; and the three Spaniards who were in front of the party had been themselves surprised and slain. So Vasco Nuñez and his men came out of the wood, beneath a hill that writhed with brown bodies and roared with the screaming of conchs. Behind them the jungle crept in thick with foes and singing

with the flicker of loosed bowstrings. In front, the hill in war-plumage.

The choice was instantly made. "Forward!" cried Balboa.

"Santiago! and forward!" shouted the men. The rush which the Indian chief had planned was never made. The Spanish formation was too quick. Almost in a twinkling the arquebusiers formed their line. The matches flared for an instant against the dark of the wood. Then the thunder of the volley drowned the war-notes of the conchs; the thick smoke shut the invaders from sight, and out of its stifling folds the men of the second line, the lancers and the keepers of bloodhounds, flung themselves into the disordered throng.

Straight up the slope they cut a path. Fulvia, crouching in the rude barricade which had been constructed of the supplies and spare accouterments, saw it all, and was swayed, frightened, aroused to a glorious, barbaric frenzy of battle, and at the last moved to frantic tears of pity for it. Conquest it was, bitter and bloody — but it was her lord's work, and she was faithful in her soul to that call above all others. Conquest — and that was no part of Balboa's mission; but he must find the Golden Kingdom, and whatever withstood him must be swept aside. He had no desire for fighting, no ardor of dominion, no blood-thirst. But to find the South Sea of which the rumor had reached him; to see the yellow gold stream back along the mountain paths to the ocean; to mark the salutes of ships departing to Spain with the wealth of the East; to hear upon men's lips his name — the name of the man who found the Way — that was his work, his ambition, his life. And if he must, in the pursuit of this idea, cut his way through Quarequa's people with his sword, then he was ready. Not for conquest, but because the work waited, and he had said, "This work is mine."

The battle on the hill was hot and bloody. Quarequa resisted after the first shock, and the rain that swept down upon them soon after the fighting began, the swift tropical deluge that blinded and drenched them, still found him fighting, and his arrows still winging from the jungle edge. But the storm ended it, for in the downpour no man could see more than a few paces, and the aerial uproar made a silence of the guns and conchs alike. In the hush that followed, the Indians retreated, and that night, under the clear stars, Balboa took up his way and camped in Quarequa's village. Above them, brooding, vast, impalpable as a cloud, towered the mysterious peaks. There they rested.

The next morning Quarequa sent in emissaries, and Balboa offered them gifts, and assured them that peace was all he sought.

The emissaries returned with the tidings, and that night Quarequa came in himself, and bent in submission to the Spanish captain. He promised guides, and offered some little gold as a ransom for the captives that had been taken. This Balboa accepted gladly, since his force was too reduced to allow of guards, and the captives were a burden to him. Of the force which had set out to cross the mountains, only sixty-seven men were fit for duty that day. The trail had been hard, and the battle far more stubborn than any the Spaniards had fought. But the end, the treaty, the peace — these were the same.

That night Estévan was aroused by a hand on his shoulder and he awoke to find Vasco Nuñez bending over him. The captain beckoned, and Hernando arose and followed him out into the open. There, with only the footfall of the distant sentry to break the stillness which enveloped them, Balboa looked long in his friend's face, and said nothing. At last he shook himself slightly, and spoke, his voice low and his words coming slowly.

The Mountains of Darien

"Estévan," he said, "you remember a night like this — back in Hispaniola. At your house it was, and Cortez was there, and Las Casas. You said —" He paused.

"I remember," Estévan replied, wondering. "And I remember what you said also."

"Good. Estévan, our time has come. This night — to-morrow — the day after — we may have done a great part of that work. To-night, without carriers and without the men, I start for the peak. Come with me if you will. I have made my preparations. Pizarro and Colmenares will hold this place till we return."

"We should carry some supplies."

"They are ready." Balboa pointed to a little group of three men at the end of the street. One was the sentry, one was Fulvia's brother, and the third was an Indian, a guide who had been given by Quarequa. The two Indians bore double packs. These Balboa divided, making a light load for each of the four.

"Good night," said Balboa.

"Good night, captain," answered the sentry quietly. The Indians started, and the four swung off along the trail.

All night they walked, and the first stop was made at sunrise, when they lighted a fire and rested. They were still in the forest, and the peaks still towered against the southwestern sky. By midday, when they rested again, the forest had been passed, and the trail became difficult. Weariness, too, was creeping upon them. The altitude was beginning to tell in the laboring of their hearts, so long accustomed to the low, dense air of the coast.

By nightfall, Balboa had hoped to reach the summit. But the deceptive clearness of the atmosphere, together with the bowlder-strewn path, made this impossible. The Indians were not shod for such traveling, and the rocks bruised and wearied their feet almost unbearably. Time after time, too,

they found it necessary to make wide detours, to avoid chasms and bare, sinister-looking slides. At sunset, Quarequa's man flung himself down, declaring in inarticulate murmurings that he would go no farther. Balboa was for urging him forward, but Estévan, seeing the bloodstains along his trail, would none of it.

"We have no need for a guide, Vasco Nuñez," he protested. "The way is in plain sight, and we know it as well as this fellow."

This was evident enough, since they all realized that the man had never been so far off the usual trail before. They built a tiny fire of moss and little gnarled roots, and left the guide to await their return. Fulvia's brother was in little better condition, but he would not allow the others to go on without him. "Where my brother goes, I go," he said, and nothing could stir him from his resolution, though the pain in his feet grew more intense with every step. Well on toward midnight they came to another stop, and this time the path seemed impossible to follow farther.

Having come so far, and being away from the familiar check of companions, the ascent of the peak took on a new bearing. On it seemed to depend the whole fate of their enterprise. Comogre's son had told of a Golden Kingdom to the south, and a great sea intervening. That was their whole hope, their whole destiny. From this peak, if the sea existed, it must be visible. Truth, or a fable; fortune or utter defeat — the future must appear in unquestionable vision from that Delphic summit. Fatigue of the flesh was nothing; their breath was short, but whether from the thinness of the air or the immediate presence of the great cast, they knew not. Their ears rang, and the ringing urged them. "On, on, on!" sang the wheeling stars. "On, on, on!" chorused their eager souls.

Before them rose a sheer cliff; at their feet a chasm

that fell away into black depths; and along the cliff, only a little above their heads, a ledge jutted forward, a mere shelf of rock, that might widen into a path, or might slip back under the beetling height. That ledge they must take, or they must wait for day and make a detour.

Vasco Nuñez de Balboa Discovers the Pacific Ocean

At the choice they quarreled, each insisting that he be allowed to go ahead, each eager for the danger and the service, Balboa because it was his duty, Estévan because he would not have his commander risk his life needlessly. The young Indian decided the question. While they hesitated, he scrambled up to the ledge, and started to feel his way along, calling to them to follow.

They mounted the ledge, and started after him. He disappeared around a point of rock. They heard an exultant cry—"The trail!—" On the instant, while that glad shout still echoed around them, there was a grinding sound of stone on stone, the clatter of falling gravel along the cliff

face, a sharp gasp of agony, and far down in the blackness a muffled crash of rebounding bowlders. But for the sound they most feared, they listened in vain. Stricken with grief, they clung to the narrow path. Balboa knelt and covered his face with his hands. From some point below him, a faint groan sounded.

He was on his feet again, and they felt their way along the curving shelf. Passing the turn, they came to a sudden drop, not more than a score of feet in depth, but raggedly descending to a level space. It was from the head of this descent that the rocks had slid away. They picked their way down the perilous stair, and at its foot they found their young comrade, broken and crushed by his fall, and still pinned down by a heavy fragment that had been loosed in the rush, and had descended upon him. From the level where he lay they could see the winding ledge, heavily penciled along the face of the precipice,— the open trail.

They lifted, by their combined efforts, the rock that had caught the young Indian under its cruel weight. A glance told them that he could not live to return with them. He turned and struggled to rise, but fainted in the effort. The two men sat down beside him, and looked at each other, their warm natures overflowing with pity. Estévan spoke:

"Captain," he said, "this boy will not come to his senses again; he has given his life for your work. Be grateful, as he would have you, and go on. I will stay with him while he lives, that he may not wake and be alone in his pain."

Vasco Nuñez would not stir. The lad's sacrifice had touched in him the chord that is struck in all strong men by a deed of utter loyalty. In vain Estévan pleaded. How many Indians, he asked cruelly, had died that the Way might be found. None, Balboa replied, had died thus. But when Estévan reminded him of Fulvia, he seemed to shake off something that bound him, and stood up.

"You are right, my friend," he said slowly. "This touches me nearly — but I must go on. The view may open from the next ridge. Await me here." He stood a moment, gazing along the trail as if trying to pierce the secret of the interlacing mountainside, then set out resolutely. An hour later, and the brown hands of Fulvia's brother grew cold in Estévan's and he laid back the broken young body on the barren rock. Gathering his pack, Estévan followed his commander.

In the first chill light of dawn he came upon him. Balboa was seated on a bowlder, gazing off into the haze of the distance. At first he did not seem to notice when Estévan came up to him, and he did not speak. After a moment he reached out with his left hand, and took hold of his friend's arm firmly, bearing down as if commanding him to kneel. With his right hand he pointed, and Estévan strained his eyes to follow. Through the lightening mists, far off, he saw a dim patch of something blue that flowed and broke along a crescent of white. The mist shifted; the patch of blue vanished. Balboa turned to him.

The face of the commander was haggard and tear-stained, but his lips smiled, and his eyes blazed with a splendid passion of triumph.

Sunset on the Mountains of the Bayam River, on the Pacific

CHAPTER VII

THE MAN AND THE LAW

RETURNING to the party at Quarequa's village, Balboa and Estévan passed the place where they had left the guide the day before, but the fellow was gone; frightened by the night and the loneliness, he had retraced his steps to the woods, and so disappeared. At the village all had been quiet. In her greeting to Balboa, however, Fulvia seemed strangely altered. She heard of her brother's death with a still resignation, as though it were not news to her, and she clung to Vasco Nuñez as to some dear one whom she had looked upon as lost. She had been frightened, she said, and she had dreamed. That was all.

Pizarro could have put the matter more clearly. He had been left in charge, and had been faithful in all things to his trust; he was not curious about the Southern Sea, except as it might serve as a path to the Golden Kingdom; Balboa might explore as much as he chose. Being left in charge, Francisco had done his full duty, and there was no need to report to his commander the midnight frights of an Indian girl. But it had curiously happened that, as nearly as Pizarro could estimate it, at the very hour when Balboa reported her brother to have fallen from the trail, he had come upon Fulvia, wandering, still apparently asleep, but with her eyes wide open, and her lips uttering smothered sounds which might in her dream have been cries of utter fear. She had left her chamber, and was groping toward the upward trail, when she was stopped by the sentry. This fellow, Garavito by name, had attempted to restrain her, and she was struggling in his arms in a blind, helpless

fashion when Pizarro came upon her. By a quick word of command he had awakened her, and she sank, weeping and disheveled, at Garavito's feet, clinging to him for human protection from the torment of some unearthly vision. Garavito had raised her gently to her feet, and the two had led her back to her own door, the sentry filled with pity and much moved by her hapless beauty, Pizarro merely annoyed

The Golden Tower of Seville

by her outcry. In this the stern lieutenant saw nothing worthy of report to his commander. Perhaps he was right. Balboa had work more urgent.

The whole party set out forthwith, leaving a few wounded with Quarequa to be returned to Coyba on their recovery, and the search for a pass across the range began. Four days of labor, with the terrible muscular fatigue of a descent following closely upon an upward march, and they came to the water's edge. The beach stretched away to the north and west, and the swift little river which they had

followed down poured out over it, marking the blue water with its warmer tint for a considerable distance from the shore.

Two things they observed that day; the water of the gulf was salt, and it rose and fell in tides. Until he knew these things, Vasco Nuñez has no conception of the extent of the sea he had found. Knowing them, he was assured that the gulf, which they had named the Gulf of San Miguel, because they came upon it on Michaelmas Day, was an arm of the ocean.

An Arroyo in central America

But what ocean? Balboa, Columbus, — all Europe, for that matter, — had never suspected that another ocean could exist. The gulf, then, must be part of the Western Ocean he had crossed from Spain, and the land of Darien, which they had taken for a remote corner of the Eastern Continent, must be an island, or an arm of the land. The immediate fact, the finding of the Golden Way, was one thing. But the meaning of this unknown sea, the ranging flight of speculation and wonder about it, was quite another.

The possibility of any extensive exploration of the coast

was cut off by the lack of boats. With great difficulty they made their way up the coast, fording streams and mounting cliffs, to the village of a chief of the west coast, one Tumaco. With him the history of Balboa's previous conquests was repeated; there was a brief pitched battle around the little village in the green level between the cliffs; a wild retreat of the defenders; an embassy, and finally a compact of peace and friendship.

Tumaco confirmed the report of the kingdom to the southward, and his confirmation took a practical and visible form. He and his people were not, as the tribes of the eastern watershed had been, terrified by the hounds of the Spaniard; this, it appeared, was because he knew that the people of the south also had beasts to serve them,—as burden-bearers of peace, not allies in war, it is true, but still the result was the same; the men of Tumaco's tribe were accustomed to the idea of the domestication of animals. In actual and concrete evidence of this, Tumaco produced a curious little image of baked clay, representing a beast which the Spaniards took for a strange oriental kind of goat or small bullock. The image was crude enough, and there was no means of judging the scale to which it was made, but to Vasco Nuñez it stood as a solid and apparent testimony of his dream's reality.

Tumaco furnished some canoes, and they set out on a coasting voyage, crossing the gulf, and proceeding southward. Balboa had claimed the sea and all shores which it might touch for the Crown of Spain, wading out to his waist and calling on all men there present to witness his proclamation. The sea, blue and smiling at the time, took the claim amiss, and the swift rising of a gale nearly put an end to his sovereignty.

In this gale the canoes were beached at imminent risk, and the crews escaped too late to save their frail vessels

from the beating surf. This put an end to the mad attempt to visit the Golden Kingdom with threescore weary men: the attempt which had been, in spite of his disavowal of it, in the back of Balboa's mind from the time the descent began.

Enough had been done. The way had been found. It was plain that it was the part of wisdom to return to Darien, report the discoveries, and wait for men from Spain to make the final expedition sure.

He had started in September. The ocean had been sighted on the twenty-fifth of that month. The wanderings along the coast, the voyage, and the blind search for the return pass took some time, and the new year, 1514, had begun when they reached their home in Santa Maria del Darien.

In the town, the absence of the governor had not been altogether fortunate. The supplies were short, and Martin Orelva, who had been put in charge, owing to the illness of Balboa's chosen *locum tenens*, had foraged at the cost of considerable offense to some of the friendly Indians of the vicinity. This was so much to be expected, so usual a course among the Spanish colonists, that Vasco Nuñez made little of it. But even the slight reproof he administered, being unhappily sent in a sealed letter carried by Estévan, put Orelva in a sullen mood of anger against the governor and all his friends, and against the bearer of the letter in particular. Twice it had fallen to Estévan, innocently in both cases, to rebuke this arrogant but inefficient officer. The memory of the first occasion made the second the more apparent; the second rankled afresh the wound of the first; Orelva's hatred was the more dangerous in that neither occasion had so arranged itself as to permit him any expression of displeasure. Estévan had won his silent, vengeful enmity; and no word passed to make it plain.

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AN ANCIENT NATIVE TOWER IN YUCATAN

Balboa, having sent Pedro de Arbolancha to Spain with letters and advices concerning the discovery of the "South Sea," and having at the same time entrusted his messenger with a pleasant weight of gold, and a small sack of pearls from the new-found coast, considered his duty to the King performed in a proper manner, and set about conciliating his neighbors and gathering supplies for the winter season. He had every reasonable hope of security and success. The least recognition he could look for, in view of his distinguished services and discoveries, was to be confirmed in the governorship of the province, and provided with the reinforcements he needed.

To Fulvia, the peace of the time and the fair prospect of the future were alike clouded and uncertain. She spoke little, but dreamed much. She grew fearful, and would often watch for hours, her face set in a boding melancholy, for the coming of ships. Vasco Nuñez thought little of it, and when, early in June, their child was born, he attributed her fears to her physical state, and comforted her as best he could. Before that month was past, a fleet came into the harbor.

A messenger from this fleet, coming ashore, asked the way to the house of the governor, seeming surprised that Balboa had not appeared on the beach to receive the news of the times. Pizarro conducted the man to Balboa's house. He found, instead of a palace ruled in oriental state by a barbaric usurper, a man in plain clothing and hempen sandals, sitting in the doorway of a little white house; there was an Indian woman by his side — a silent, appealing young woman in a dress of embroidered doe-skin, with a young child in her arms.

The messenger spoke with some surprise. "Am I in the presence," he inquired, "of the Señor Vasco Nuñez de Balboa, alcalde mayor of Santa Maria?"

The question was intentionally and transparently inaccurate. Balboa stood up, courteously, and corrected the address.

"I have the honor to hold a different commission," he said: "governor of the Province of Darien."

"My office is to apprise you of the arrival of his Excellency, Don Pedrarias de Avila, governor of Darien," announced the messenger. Fulvia shrank back and touched her husband's arm. Francisco Pizarro laid his hand on his sword. "Whatever you announce," he growled, "you shall speak it with respect to Señor Balboa."

"For the Señor Balboa I have every respect, sir," the man answered firmly. "We have heard that he has done a great work in these countries."

"Then recognize him —"

"Señor," Vasco Nuñez broke in sharply, "my loyal greetings to his Excellency, the Governor de Avila. I congratulate him on his safe arrival. He will find his colony ready to give him proper welcome and allegiance, as is due to the King's deputy. Pizarro, escort the governor's messenger back to the beach."

Bowing ceremoniously, the man departed. Balboa sat down again in the doorway, his face lined with bitter grief. The dark night of injustice had come over his steadfast soul. All the labor, all the perils, all the keen disappointments of the past years returned and oppressed him with their unutterable weight. The wrong, the pity, the blind error of it! His work — what folly and futility he saw it now to be! His struggle and loyalty had failed, and some chance whim of a courtier, some lawyer's little spite, had succeeded. The skill, the daring, the vision, all these were nought. His mighty heart cried out, and the still glare of the sunset gave no answer back. With set lips he sat, and knitted brows. Years had come upon him in that hour.

On the Gulf Coast

Wild chances he saw, vain temptations and disloyal, frantic desires. The sunset faded from the palms, and the stars sprang out, fiery points in the chill heaven. Behind him, Fulvia knelt down, shaken with dry, still sobbing. The child cried, and she could not comfort it. At last his ears caught a sound, an unaccustomed tramping, a click of metal, and a smothered roar as of intolerable anger; he shook himself, and stood up. Whatever the end of this miserable game, he would await it on his feet.

Into the starlit space a troop of men came swiftly, not marching, but hurrying along in a ragged crowd. They turned toward his cottage, and stopped, facing him in a disordered line. At their head was Pizarro, and beside him, Colmenares. Their faces were dark with wrath, their voices heavy and threatening. The same desperate expression marked the bearing of the swineherd adventurer and the war-trained Spanish gentleman.

Pizarro spoke. "Balboa," he said, "we are come to assure you of our swords. We will resist this damnable usurpation, and we will defend your authority. Command us."

Vasco Nuñez looked over the men before him. He knew them all, knew their strength, their experience, their devotion, their indomitable courage. Beyond them he saw, glimmering between the palms, the trail to Coyba. He took a step toward them, and flung up his right hand in a gesture of authority.

"Go back to your homes," he said in a low, tense voice. "We are Spaniards. The King rules us. Disperse!" A rising murmur thrilled through the rebellious troop. Vasco Nuñez cried out, and his words rang, deep and hard like mountain thunder overhead, "Disperse! There shall be no treason. Till my successor lands, I am governor of Darien." He laid his hand upon the doorpost, and leaned

against it, waiting. In another minute the street before him was clear.

The next morning he paid his respects to Don Pedrarias, when that old man, white-haired, cruel-visaged, suspicious-eyed, made his unwelcome landing from the ships.

Don Pedrarias did not come alone. The men poured out of the ships in the most incredible fashion. Fifteen hundred they counted, and the old heads along the beach had computed that the fleet could not have carried a thousand. Men newly discharged from the Italian service had, as a matter of fact, taken possession of every spare inch on the vessels, and the lure of Balboa's discoveries had brought this throng of followers into the train of his successor. The city of Santa Maria del Darien took on a new aspect. A bishop, Juan de Quevedo, had arrived, and the little church became a cathedral. Gaspar de Espinosa came as chief judge; in his train, as chief constable, appeared the thin, ascetic face of a man who moved by the springs of legal machinery — a man who hated Vasco Nuñez as heartily as the law permitted — the Bachelor Enciso.

Balboa reported in full to Don Pedrarias. He gave him information which could be had from no other man — priceless knowledge, the key to power and success in Darien. Within the week, Enciso came with a warrant and took the great-hearted captain, the ocean-finder, the man who had preserved everything and kept back nothing, before the chief judge on a charge of treason and usurpation of authority. The trial was set for the next day. They let Balboa go home that night, because they dared not deprive him of his liberty. Already his fame had spread among the new-come colonists, and to imprison him would have been to invite insurrection.

Estévan, knowing that of all the charges against Balboa,

one only could be made dangerous, if justice were done, conferred with his friend during the evening.

"They can prove nothing against you," he said, "except that you used a commission from Don Diego, knowing it to have doubtful weight. Of this I alone am cognizant. It is best for me not to be here."

"I used that commission to save the colony," Balboa protested. "I am no lawyer. How should I have known the limits of the viceroy's territory?"

"We both knew," said Estévan, sadly. "You could not have done otherwise. Let them take testimony. It will prove and record only that you have done your work — done it marvelously well. But in this one fact they have a thread of legality that may snare you, and they will use it, if it offers."

"You may be quite right," Vasco Nuñez admitted, "but I shall take no shame to myself for it."

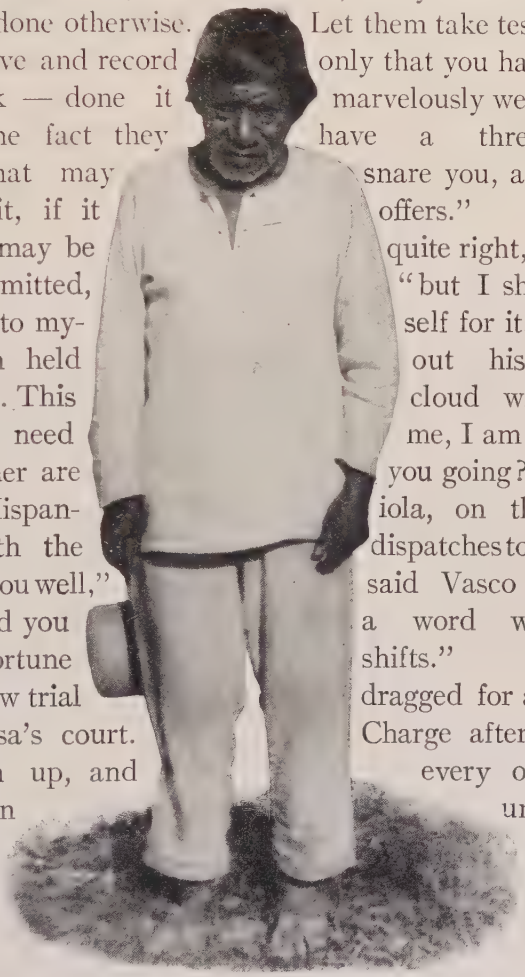
Estévan held out his hand. "Good bye. This cloud will pass. When you need me, I am yours."

"Whither are you going?"

"To Hispaniola, on the ship leaving with the dispatches to-night."

"Fare you well," said Vasco Nuñez. "I will send you a word whenever my weary fortune shifts."

The slow trial dragged for a month in Espinosa's court. Charge after charge was taken up, and every one was beaten down under the clear and brilliant light of testi-



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A Maya Chief of Pure Stock

mony — the sworn and lasting record of Balboa's worth. The enmity of the chief constable and the court was all too plain, and it reacted to their shame on the lips of men. The bishop, at first their friend, saw day by day the persecution foiled by truth, and discerned the rugged greatness of the man they had set out to ruin. In after time, his friendship was a great comfort to Vasco Nuñez, being won, as it seemed, by a recital of deeds that made the churchman feel as though he had been at Balboa's side through all his labors; it was something to win a powerful friend so, and to hold him by a justice which he could not help but feel. At the end, Balboa was acquitted of every charge, cleared in a court of his foes. Being cleared, there now remained to him nothing but his glorious fame.

An Ancient Bridge in central America

CHAPTER VIII

CORTEZ TAKES A WIFE

FROM the stirring days and wilderness hazards of Darien, Hernando Estévan went back with a vague relief, not unmixed with more positive delights, to the quiet town of Santo Domingo, and the pleasant, settled ways of Hispaniola; to the enduring, patient love of Christina, his wife, and the prattle of Christopher, the little son whom he had never seen before; to the greetings of old friends, and the home-lights. In a season, however, it became apparent that Santo Domingo had lost many of its attractions, and most of its opportunities for active men. Cuba, newly conquered and being settled, beckoned him, and the lure of it was strengthened by the fact that in the new province he might better serve the kinsmen of Columbus, to whose party he felt himself forever devoted. A fair chance offering, Estévan took his family to Santiago the next spring, having sold his holdings in Hispaniola.

The island had been desolated by Velásquez in his conquest. None of Balboa's shrewd, soldierly tactics had been applied here. One chief of the natives had resisted steadily, and him the relentless governor had burned at the stake, with the unholy avowal that he was punishing a rebel and an infidel. In the hope of mitigating the fate of this single patriot, a priest of Velásquez's party had tried to convert him to the church, promising him the joys of Heaven if he would but submit to baptism; this the chief, on hearing that Heaven must inevitably contain some Spaniards of the more regenerate kind, had rejected with tragic scorn; and the soul of Hatuey, its only defender, went up in flame that

Cuba might fall beneath the Spanish power. But the rule of Don Diego Velásquez prospered none the less, and the island promised a fair field for the energies of the restless men of Hispaniola.

Las Casas, more surely than any other, had found his work. Estévan had heard rumors, in Darien, of the scathing sermon which had been preached at Santo Domingo by

Santiago de Cuba (*From an ancient print*)

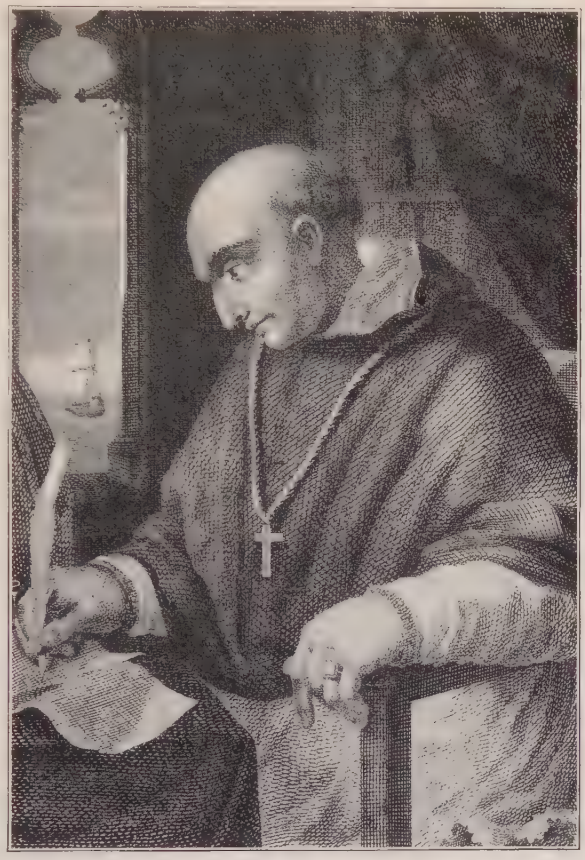
Antonio Montesino, back in the year after the departure of Enciso's expedition; the sermon in which the Dominican order voiced its hatred of the enslavement of the natives, and uttered its warning of the uncompromising attitude of the Church. But to Las Casas that message had come directly, clear and immediate as a trumpet blast.

Las Casas had freed his slaves. He had gone to Spain and talked with Bishop Fonseca; — and that brutal old fiend had scorned his humanity, and turned him out of doors. He had next visited Cardinal Ximenez, regent of Spain, and the result had been far otherwise.

To the cardinal he had related the horrors of the Spanish slave-power, the black cruelties and iniquities of the traffic

in human flesh; grown wiser from the answer of Fonseca, he spoke now more craftily: "With what justice can these things be done, whether the Indians are free or not?"

To his delight, the cardinal took him up sharply: "With no justice! What, are not the Indians free? Who questions their freedom?"



Bishop de Las Casas (*From an old engraving*)

Before that hour, Las Casas might have worn out his life for the cause he had chosen and it would have profited him nothing, save as a man and priest. With the cardinal regent at his back, the work gained way; officially, the idea of justice to the natives now had a head. When Las Casas came back to Cuba, two years after Estévan's arrival in the island, it was with an imperial charge: he had been made Protector of the Indians, and in his single person the war of right against might and expediency found its leader. In the ardor of this struggle, the young priest became more and

more encompassed with trials, but his friendship for Estévan and his household was unshaken, and they continued in intimate sympathy. Estévan knew something of the spirit behind the work of his friend, even though he was too much a man of the time to see the larger aim of it. For Bartholomew de Las Casas was not a child of his own generation, but a herald, a voice crying the coming of a newer and a lighter world. Estévan knew him in the beginning, before the animating idea of his life was made plain to him; and he kept his friendship through the days of struggle and discouragement that came after; and again, when the great work had begun to flower in law and humanity, he had the fortune to see and recognize the strength and beauty of the cause and the man.

In Cuba, too, he heard again of the old knight, Don Ponce de Leon, who had once visited him in Hispaniola; heard that a new land had been found to the northwestward and that the search for the fountain had failed. Men said the knight planned to go back again, and wise heads were doubtfully shaken at his credulity.

"These wonders," said Cortez, "are always beyond some sea we cannot cross, or some tribe we cannot conquer. Why does n't the old man take to searching for gold? That would give him all the youth he will ever need again."

"You forget," Estévan replied, quietly, "he is old, and he loves."

"Then God help him, if he finds the fountain," snapped Cortez, shifting, as he spoke, his left arm, which was in bandages from a sword wound he had got in a duel.

In truth, the cynic vein in Cortez's talk was assumed, because the publicity of his own love affairs was beginning to wear upon him. Since coming to Cuba as alcalde, and taking up a ranch and a *repartimiento* of slaves, he had drifted from one amour to another, and his ranging fancy

had led him into more fighting than would have been required for the conquest of an island. But it had been so gayly carried off, and so humorously reported, that the homesick Spaniards blessed him for it, since it gave a note of diversion to the stern toil of the settlement.

Not until the Hidalgo Xaurez came to Havana with his four blooming daughters did this victorious career in romance receive a check, and then only because Governor Velásquez interested himself in the eldest of the Xaurez sisters. This interest Cortez impudently asserted was in rivalry to his own claim, because, he said, he had seen her first. Not wishing to make the matter too obvious an issue between himself and the governor, Cortez shifted his favor to the second sister, Catalina, in whom he soon found qualities of mind and heart which completely eclipsed the attractions of all his former inamoratas.

But not for long. The wistful charms of the third sister had begun to make themselves felt, as she in turn came out of the chrysalis of girlhood. Catalina grew suddenly fearful through her lover's volatility, and the younger maiden began to sing in the moonlight nights, and to wear flowers in her hair. Then the governor took a part in the proceeding. He called on Cortez to marry Catalina, and have done with his wavering, or face his grave displeasure.

At first this amused Cortez. When he found, a little later, that Velásquez was in earnest, he raged.

"This governor," he said, recklessly, "shows a most unseemly interest in my private affairs, and lets the colony go to the devil. I will not be driven to matrimony by all the governors in the Indies."

"If Cortez does not marry the girl he has himself chosen, I will make Cuba too small for him," Velásquez declared, and he wrote out a stiff command, an ultimatum, in fact, declaring his purpose in plain words. This Cortez returned,

scrawled over with his reply, which he couched formally under three heads:

First, Señor Cortez was a free man, a gentleman of Spain, a bachelor, and eligible to bestow his hand as he chose.

Secondly, Señor Cortez felt that his own taste in choosing one of the sisters to be better than another man's, and held that this was specially proved in the case of Governor Velásquez, who had chosen, as every one in Santiago knew, too hastily.

Thirdly, Señor Cortez looked upon any interference as officious meddling, and would make this point clear upon whomsoever might question it.

Copies of this precious document somehow came into circulation among the official families of the island, and the services of Cortez in the cause of comedy met with high approval on all sides, though somewhat more furtively than before. What Velásquez would have done on this provocation alone is doubtful. He was relieved of the difficulty by the capture of his man, the next night, in an effort to get off to Hispaniola in an open boat, loaded with complaints against the governor and disaffected prayers, which Velásquez could only look upon as treasonable, addressed to Don Diego Columbus at Santo Domingo. Cortez might never have taken up with the governor's opponents had it not been for the interference with what he considered his individual rights. As it was, he suffered himself to be imprisoned without further talk, feeling, no doubt, that to trifle with the governor's temper at that time would have been fatal.

He was confined in a cell on the second floor of the alcalde prison; the window bars were loose, and in the morning they found he had pried them off, let himself down a ridge in the wall, and taken refuge in the church of San

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A Prehistoric Pyramid in Yucatan

Miguel. Velásquez went in person, fuming and cursing, to get him out.

Cortez waved him an easy good morning as he approached.

"What are you doing here, you vagabond?" cried the governor.

"Claiming my right of sanctuary," said Cortez, smilingly overlooking the official's hard words.

Velásquez tried to lure him out, but in vain. He then set a bravo named Juan Escudero to watch, promising him a hundred pistoles if he could catch him outside the church. In two days, Cortez having grown desperately weary of his captivity, and having seen a girl with red flowers in her hair who might have been the third of the Xaurez galaxy, across the plaza, this Escudero earned his money. Governor Velásquez took no chances. They put irons on Cortez's feet, and confined him in the hold of a ship that stood off a half mile or so down the bay. The town, which had been laughing heartily over it all, grew suddenly quiet.

The irons were a point Cortez had not bargained for. To be shut up in a church was one thing; to be sent to the hulks in chains, like a common criminal, was another. Besides, the gyves being heedlessly put on, over his boots, gave him more pain, as he said to himself, ruefully, than he had ever thought to endure for the love of a woman. His hands were free. Before morning he had succeeded in stripping off the boots in sections, and with some lacerations of ankles and heels, ridding himself of the manacles.

"There are advantages," he observed, dryly, "in coming of an aristocratic family. The ankles of the hidalgo are delicate, and irons are designed for the feet of common men." With this sage observation, and the help of a little craft in dealing with the watch, he let himself down over the ship's

stern and swam ashore. When the governor rode by the church of San Miguel the next morning, there was Cortez, suavely inquiring if his Excellency wished to be remembered in the devotions of an honest man.

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A Henequen Plant in Yucatan

Velásquez bit his lips and choked back his wrath, more desirous of further avoiding the laughter of the colony than of cursing a fellow who seemed to thrive on curses. The charges booked against Cortez were serious, and his enemy could well afford to wait. But all the time the prisoner in the church knew well enough that he had only to marry Catalina, and the Xaurez family would see that he escaped without injury. This he explained to Estévan, when he came with a new pair of boots and ointment for the torn ankles.

"That 's very simple, then," said Estévan. "Do you love her?"

"How do I know?" said Cortez. "I have n't seen her for three days."

"Does she love you?"

"Of course she does." Cortez paused, considering gravely. "I speak too much in haste. She did love me, for her sister — the younger one — has made a bit of trouble between us. Estévan, my beloved friend, I have the solution, and wonder that I never thought of it before. Will you go now for me to the Xaurez sisters; go to them in order, Catalina first. Tell them I am here, and only await a bride that I may become a sober married man. One moment. Do not go yourself — send your wife. Let me see which one comes. Then I will know, and there 's an end to all the trouble."

The day passed slowly, and the prisoner, leaning against the church door, watched the shadows cross and lengthen on the sunlit square. Before the quiet hour of the siesta was over, a veiled young woman came into the church, and the old duenna who followed her knelt in the farthest corner, out of sight and earshot. Christina had done her message. One of the sisters had dared to come in open day, though she felt the rustle of gossiping tongues behind every shutter as she walked along the sleeping streets. With Catalina, love and the chance of love was greater than pride.

But later, when evening had come on, another veiled girl came to the church of San Miguel, mincingly, just to see if the church might be empty. She found that it was so, and tossed her petulant little head, so that her veil slipped, and a droning old priest saw that she wore scarlet flowers in her hair, though he did not see her face.

Matters being quietly arranged with the family of

Señorita Xuarez, Cortez went to call on the governor, carrying the marriage contract in his hand. The sudden apparition of the escaped prisoner, fully armed and smiling, started Velásquez out of his usual composure.

CARDINAL XIMENEZ (*From the portrait in the gallery at Florence*)

"What do you mean, sir?" he cried.

"I have come to explain my conduct, your Excellency."

"Can you explain why I should not have you hanged?"

"Certainly, your Excellency. It would be highly improper in you to hang one who is about to become — shall we say — almost a member of your exalted family." Cortez laid down the contract. There the matter rested. Cortez dined with the governor that night. They ate, drank, and were merry. In the morning, a meddling fellow found them asleep in the same bed, both with their boots on; Cortez had sworn he could not remove his without bruising his heels, and his Excellency had refused to take any advantage of him.

CHAPTER IX

THE SOUTH SEA TRAIL

IN removing to Cuba, Estévan put himself out of the way of the news and gossip of the Darien colony, which passed, for the most part, through the port of Santo Domingo, in Hispaniola. He heard, now and then, that the settlement under Pedrarias throve by its numbers, but that the work of keeping peace with the Indians, and maintaining commercial relations with them, which Balboa had considered so important, had lapsed, and that the colony was obliged to protect itself by constant warfare. With some glee the friends of Balboa in Cuba heard of the defeat of Governor de Avila in a skirmish, and the retreat of the old man through the forest, chattering prayers as he ran, and dodging every ray of sunlight as if it had been an arrow. It was this defeat of his successor which encouraged Balboa to write to the King his famous letter on the treatment of the natives, a letter which still survives, and which still keeps in its ill-wrought characters and uncouth language the flame of loyalty and mercy that burned in the writer's generous heart. This letter did nothing to heal the breach between Vasco Nuñez and the governor. "Where once we met the Indians openly, and traded with them, and they loved and feared us," wrote Balboa, "we must now go in mailed force, and the arrows from the thickets give us treacherous death. And all because those who govern us will rive and seize, when they might enjoy in peace."

Estévan knew well enough the life Balboa was leading, untrusted by the man who commanded in his rightful place, hanging on to his little property in the colony by hook or

crook, keeping out of the way of his enemies, but holding still the affection and respect of the original colonists who had served under him. A hard life for a proud man, and a test of his allegiance; but what was he to do? His letter to the King had been his only outcry, and it had raised such a dust in Spain that it became evident something must be done for the writer of it. Pedrarias, had he had his way, would have silenced his rival forever, and said nothing

Native Village at Nombre de Dios

about it. But Balboa had friends, — hot-blooded men who loved him, — and to touch his person would have cut the thread which suspended the sword of rebellion over the head of the iron-hearted governor.

In Cuba, Estévan met Orelva again, and had the satisfaction, as he thought, of being of service to the man he had offended. For this Orelva showed a pleasant gratitude, and even came to Estévan's house, and cheerily regaled Christina with tales of Estévan's deeds in the southern colony, during the time they had been together with Vasco Nuñez; tales that made Christina's cheeks flush with pleasure, and her brave spirit glow with pride and regret so

interwoven that she never knew herself whether she was glad or sorry to hear the man speak.

In the autumn of 1516, Balboa's summons to his friend came. "My fortunate star has risen," he wrote. "I am for the Golden Kingdom, and the way is clear. But without you, my friend, I cannot go." Then Hernando Estévan took up his destiny again, and went back, grieving a little for the home he must leave, and warm with hope for the great enterprise he was to share, to the desperate city on the shore of Darien.

At Santa Maria he found that Balboa, with his wife and the people of his company, had gone to Acla, the port which had been built at the old landing place in Careta's territory. It was not till this time that Estévan heard anything in detail about his friend's plan. Now he heard it all, from many sources; no two quite agreeing. From the accounts he gathered, however, it was plain that the expedition had been devised by the governor as a measure of peace, because he felt too strongly the pressure of Balboa's popularity, and the effect of his letter to the King; also that Vasco Nuñez held his commission to conquer the lands of the south from Pedrarias, not from the court of Spain; and that the bishop, Quevedo, had been instrumental in patching up the truce and giving Balboa his opportunity. From some of the narrators, but not all, there was an added detail: Vasco Nuñez had been offered one of the governor's daughters in marriage, since the bishop refused to acknowledge Fulvia as a wife, and Balboa had accepted the betrothal, never having seen the young lady, who was still awaiting her father's disposal in a convent at Seville.

At Acla, everything was in that state of seeming confusion that immediately precedes a great undertaking hastily made ready. Vasco Nuñez had built him four small ships, caravels of slight burden and easy rig, and was now engaged

in taking them apart. Estévan was just in time to assist in this work, and his experience at sea, coupled with his skill in handling men, made him an invaluable aid. A new trail had been discovered, easier than the one they had first followed, but the carrying of four ships, piecemeal, across the mountain range, was a task of herculean proportions. The expedition was not a popular one with the colony at large, because few of the settlers trusted the governor; they hesitated to embark in a plan which might be overturned by his treachery, even under a leader of Balboa's strength. But the little company who had followed before, the ones who had sworn the oath in Comogre's courtyard — and broken it, — were there to the last man.

Vasco Nuñez welcomed his friend with delight. "At last," he exclaimed, "we have begun upon that work of ours — the great work. In three months we shall be afloat on the South Sea — the sea we found, Hernando."

"Scarcely so soon as that," Estévan objected. "The trail is steep, as I remember it. They tell me you have found a new one, but even so —"

Vasco Nuñez laid a hand on his arm. "I have not been idle, all this waiting time. I have found a new trail, and a better one. More amazing, I have found a point where the land grows narrower still, narrower than from the Gulf of Uraba, or the pass to the Gulf of San Miguel. How far, think you, does the South Sea extend?"

"Probably to the coast of Cipango."

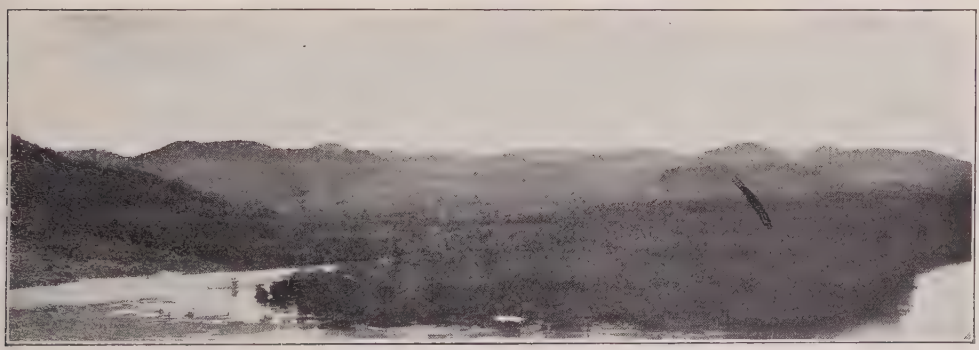
"Ah, yes, but we do not know where Cipango is. Columbus thought Hispaniola was Cipango, when he came to it. And ever since men have searched, and found nothing of it. I, too, have a theory. This land of Darien grows narrower to the north. Good, we are sure of that. But I know more; I know that farther still to the north, it grows broader again, and the Indians know of no end to it. It

Along Balboa's Coast

may reach even to the land of Florida that Ponce de Leon found, the land that we had forgotten about. To the south, too, the land grows wide again, and a range of mountains too terrible to be crossed shuts us off from the Golden Kingdom that way. What does this all mean?"

"I admit," said Estévan, slowly, "that I can form no opinion. The great Admiral, Don Christopher, reasoned otherwise."

"But we know things he never dreamed," Balboa remarked oracularly. He drew out a curious map, rudely drawn and lettered, and unfolded it carefully. "I have drawn this," he said, "from the things I have learned, and the things I have guessed. This coast you know,"— as he pointed out the wavering line around the Gulf of Uraba,



The Mountains of the Pacific

and up the shore past Acla to the northwest; — " this coast we followed a little way. The rest is conjecture. But believe me, my friend, we may find the Golden Kingdom by coasting southward, and by God's grace we shall do so much. But we shall not find Cipango. That is another voyage."

"That, too, we shall make," Estévan exclaimed.

Vasco Nuñez shook his head. "What, think you, if we struck out on our South Sea, straight out to the westward, as Columbus did?"

"You are a bold man, Vasco Nuñez. How far would it be to land?"

"If I knew that," Balboa answered, "I should not stop to conquer the Golden Kingdom. This sea we found is no arm of ocean, no mere lake of salt water. I have seen more of it now." He paused, and his lips compressed to a thin line. "There is still work for men like you and me, Estévan. But first, we must carry over these ships, and they must be launched before the rains come, or our carriers will die on the trails."

"But the map, Vasco Nuñez — the voyage across —"

A step sounded in the street, and a man came in to report to Balboa something about the dismantling of the ships. While he talked with this man, the commander folded up the map and thrust it in his pocket. The man went out, and his footfall died away in the soft dust of the street. Balboa listened a moment, his finger to his lips; then he took out the map again, and carefully burned it. Estévan protested with a gesture. Vasco Nuñez silenced him with another. "Visions — vain visions," he muttered. "Let us have no more of them."

In the tension and excitement of their effort to transport the ships Balboa and Estévan lost track of time. They only knew that each day, in the fiery heat and dust of the

The Exuberance of Tropical America

whitening trail, a certain number of carriers went out, and a certain amount of shaped lumber reached the other shore on the backs of the carriers who had started seven days before. The portage should have taken nine days, but the crew-captains, having caught something of the commander's tireless energy, urged that each caravan cross in two days less. Balboa never rested. Men fell under their burdens, and died of the toil and heat, but none of them worked so steadily or so vigorously as he. Early and late he was at the beach, and along the trail, directing and toiling, so that no task seemed too difficult, or too mean, or too dangerous, for the hands of the leader to share. In this lay the secret of the devotion with which he was served. His enemies, back in Santa Maria, might speak as they liked against him; but on the portage there was no man who dared or cared to shirk, since no labor was disdained by the great captain, and scarcely a slave among them had not felt the kindly power of his assistance.

In spite of this, the haste and hardship of it made death a constant companion to the enterprise. The governor, thinking to get rid of a troublesome crew, sent Vasco Nuñez a band of negro slaves, and afterward a manacled chain of Caribs, brought in by an expedition from the islands along the Pearl Coast. These were accepted with thanks and set promptly to work, and beyond a few quarrels among themselves, they proved orderly enough.

The attempt to complete the portage before the rains proved a failure, and Vasco Nuñez had constantly before his eyes, from the beginning of the wet season, the melancholy spectacle of carriers dead and dying in his service. The white trail became a ditch of trodden mud, and from one end of it to the other there were little camps, scarce more than a shelter of leaves, where the sick awaited their end and the dead their burial.

But the timbers, dismantled, confused, and warped by the suns and rain of the overland journey, were gradually piled in the rude sheds on the southern shore, and the shipwrights set up their ways, and the sound of hammers began to ring across the mysterious blue of the virgin sea. The men of the expedition lived in long sheds thatched with palm leaves, and Balboa and Fulvia set up their simple household in a camp built after the Indian fashion, with the addition of a veranda, where the thatch extended to shelter a little space from the intolerable and continuous wash of the warm, sickish rain. This camp was the headquarters of the expedition; here the little family lived, and hither came the men for their orders, as the work progressed day by day, toward its culmination. In the sluicing floods, toiling without thought of comfort, the shipwrights set up their structures; the ribs of the ships showed bare and desolate through the green mist, till gradually the planks enfolded them, and the hulls took shape. One by one the caravels slid off, unceremoniously launched, and the quiet waters closed over their anchors; one by one the masts rose, and rigging grew and flowered upon them. The fleet had paid the toll, and the sea-way was open before it.

In the little veranda of the captain's headquarters, Vasco Nuñez and Estévan watched the clouds mass and break and mass again, one night when the rain had ceased. The ships were nearly ready, and a sense of rest and security had come upon them. Fulvia sat at Balboa's feet, and their child, a slender girl of three or four years, played with the strands of a basket her mother was deftly weaving. The clouds broke away, dissolving in the winds that played along the summits to the north, and the stars blazed out. Vasco Nuñez strained his eyes into the heavens, and seemed lost in contemplation. The night was purple, and its golden spangles hung close overhead.

"Hernando, my friend," he said at length, "have you skill in the reading of the stars?"

"Only as a sailor may know them," Estévan replied. "I know nothing of astrology."

"And that red planet we see above the cleft in the peak — the near bright star, there in the northern sky?"

"Mars."

"An astrologer once told me — a very learned man he was, in Venice — that if ever I beheld Mars over a moun-

A Market Scene in central America

tain, to the north, and the other planets as they are to-night, I should be in great danger, in a peril more imminent than any hazard of battle. If I escaped, he said, I might be one of the greatest rulers of men in the world.

"I see now that he may be right about the second part, but the peril of which he spoke, I see nothing of that. Cobwebs, I take it — cobwebs. The man was old, and his brain wandered."

Estévan sat in silence, a chill at his heart, while Balboa went on building and unfolding the dream of his glorious hope.

"In the second part of this horoscope, the sage may have been right. We are here, my friend, on a new shore; our

fleet is ready, our comrades faithful, our enemies far behind us. The sky clears. To the south, we know of the golden Biru, the kingdom of infinite wealth; we carry the Cross, and God will not see us fail. What then? The kingdom shall be ours, and the gold shall be ours, and the splendor of it all shall be ours. For our souls' sake, the Cross shall be planted in those glistering cities. Then we shall seek the way back, the passage by ocean which must exist, if we can but discover it; or we may set the armies of our kingdom to digging, and win back a way to Spain across Darien, letting the new sea mingle with the old; it would not be impossible — think of the canals of the Low Countries, and the sails among the fields. So much we shall do for Spain, for the King. Estévan, I read the stars for myself: my future lies open before me."

In the stillness, when he had ceased, Fulvia's head rested on her husband's knees, and the basket-work dropped beside her. She had never heard him speak so before, for he was a man of few words, and more given to thought than to rapture. He put his hand on her head, and she shook with a great dry sob, and hid her face, but the tears glittered through between her fingers. Vasco Nuñez stood up suddenly, and lifted her to him.

"Fool," he muttered, "talking, while my work waits."

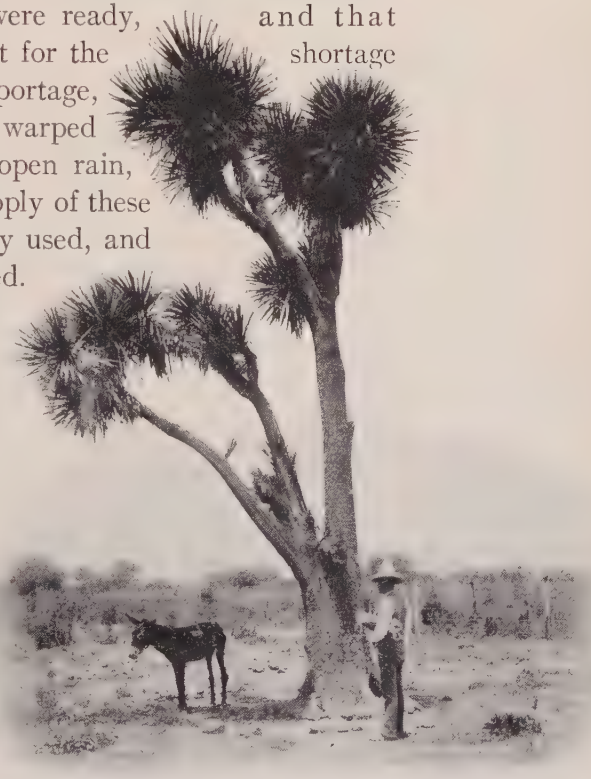
CHAPTER X

THE SCAFFOLD IN THE RAIN

THE next morning there came a rumor, not in any way supported by proof, that Don Pedrarias had been superseded, and that a new governor was about to land in Darien.

While Estévan and Vasco Nuñez were talking of this, came Francisco Garavito, a younger brother of Andres Garavito, who had been with Balboa on his first crossing of the province, and Luis Botello, the master shipwright, to say that their supplies were ready, and that the little fleet could sail, but for the shortage of iron and pitch. In the portage, so many of the timbers had warped that the hulls, laid in the open rain, had proved leaky; so the supply of these two articles had been wholly used, and more of both would be needed. They asked that they might be allowed to go back to Acla, and bring what they needed. Iron and pitch — that was all: fate and ruin.

Balboa chafed at the delay. Besides, there was the new governor, if the rumor were true — and a new governor was always an uncertainty. He hated Pedrarias, but



A Yucca Palm in Yucatan

he knew him, and a truce had been made. The new man might be gracious and generous — what you will; but then, he might stop the expedition. Balboa spoke frankly to Francisco and to Luis Botello.

"If this rumor be true," he said, "we have need for caution. You will find out as you near Acla. If there is a new man, come back, and we shall make shift with what we have. If Don Pedrarias still rules, go in boldly and ask for the iron and pitch."

The little conference was held in the veranda. A sentinel, driven in by the rain, took shelter along the edge of the camp, under the thatch.

"You trust the governor too far," protested Estévan. "They could not send out from Spain a man who would hate you as he does."

Vasco Nuñez smiled. "You forget," he remarked in a chill tone, "that the bishop has committed me to an alliance with the governor's family. He looks upon me as a son — almost as a son."

"He looks upon you as his most dangerous foe," Estévan broke out, impatiently.

"Not for long. When we sail from this port, my friend, we sail to new countries, far enough and strange enough — lands where his arm and his authority do not reach. I do not fear him. I do not even fear his — his friendship, nor the relation he forces upon me. We are going too far."

The sentry changed his position. In his waterlogged brain a dark idea, almost a plan, was shaping itself. He was a fellow who had made the commander much trouble, and the sentry-go he was then doing was a punishment.

When the men had been given their permission to go to Acla for the iron and pitch, Luis Botello went to get his carriers ready, but Francisco Garavito stayed to speak further, and at his request, privately, with Balboa.

"I have this to say, my captain," he began, showing some embarrassment. "My brother, Andres, whom you know, has left us, and I do not know where he is gone. I am your faithful servant, Don Vasco. You are not my brother's keeper. Yet I ask you: do you know where he is?"

"I do not know," answered Balboa, "but I will be frank with you. I warned your brother — openly warned him, a few days back, and he sulked under it. Yet I gave him only a fair chance. I told him he was free to go with me to the ends of the earth, but if my wife had cause again to complain of his attentions, I would kill him. That is all."

Francisco hung his head. "This is just, I admit. I have known this madness was in him, and it has been a sore grief to me. A man's love, in this — ".

"Let us speak of it no further," said Vasco Nuñez, gravely. "Let it be as if it had never been."

"I ask your forgiveness," Francisco said, bowing humbly.

"It is not needful that you ask it. You have not offended me."

That day Francisco started out with Luis Botello and two others, well mounted but without escort, up the trail for Acla. They carried no word in writing from Balboa, but went under his oral instructions to return without delay in case they found a new governor; and to go in for the iron and pitch, and arrange for carriers, in case Don Pedrarias still stood in authority. As they passed out of the camp, the fellow who had stood guard by the commander's porch came up with them, and begged Francisco, as a favor to a man in distress, to carry a letter for him; this sealed letter, addressed to Señor La Puente, the treasurer at Acla, seemed innocent enough, though Botello remarked that La Puente was no friend to Vasco Nuñez, having repeatedly tried to levy sundry false charges upon the appropriation made for

the expedition, and having been vigorously withstood. Not wishing to make delay by discussing it, Francisco took the letter, and agreed to deliver it.

They made good speed across the isthmus, and neared the site of Acla after three days' riding, with their horses still in good condition. Luis Botello went up to the house of a friend in the outskirts of the town in the early morning. There he learned that the governor had not been deposed. As he started to return to the rendezvous of his three friends, however, he was taken up by a detachment of the governor's men, and brought before Don Pedrarias most unceremoniously, under charge of acting as a spy.

Botello, wroth at the word, and wronged by the arrest, protested obstinately, stated the object of his visit to Acla, and demanded that some one be sent out to inquire of his three comrades, whose word should certainly conclude all doubt about his errand. As it happened, La Puente went out to find the others, and when he came up to them, Francisco thought of the letter and handed it to him.

Señor La Puente, having some other business, and finding the men peaceable, sent them on, and went home with his letter. When they came to the governor's house, they found that the worthy defense which had been made by Luis Botello had been attacked by the man they had missed the week before, and that Andres Garavito had given the governor the testimony he most desired: a sworn statement that Balboa was a traitor, and that he never intended to marry his daughter. Andres Garavito, it must be admitted, was sorely racked at his own recital, and his words took flighty shapes as he spoke, and his eyes rolled balefully upon the governor and Luis Botello, whom he hated because he was Balboa's friend. A mind distraught, plainly, was this; a man whose heart had been kindled into a flame that night, far back, when Balboa had found an ocean, and Fulvia had

The Old Castle at Panama

dreamed and wandered, tormented by his peril, and had fallen, in all her melting beauty, into the arms of a sentinel — a man who could not forget. What black hours of despair, and what mad tortures of love and desire had intervened, not even the man himself knew. But he knew that his time had come, that the chance was ripe, and he swore to Balboa's treason in a veritable ecstasy.

The coming of his brother calmed him somewhat, and the governor hesitated, taking care lest he be criticized for acting on the word of a madman. The finding of the others, and their agreement with his testimony, added weight to the claims of Luis Botello. The four men were plainly innocent, and their request was reasonable enough, since the supplies requisitioned for the fleet were by no means exhausted. Don Pedrarias let his rage subside, though he may have kept his suspicion. But as he was signing the order for the iron and pitch, La Puente came in, his lean face aglow, and a letter in his hand.

They watched Don Pedrarias read the letter.

He did not break out in wrath, nor vent himself in curses, as he had done before, while Andres Garavito was speaking. He leaned over the paper, and picked at the bits of broken wax where the seals had been, and his stiff old fingers seemed to caress the writing, as if it were a friend who had told him something he loved to hear. For a long time he sat thus, and La Puente leaned over the table, and fixed his gaze on the missive. The governor's mouth twitched, and his red-rimmed eyes blinked; after a while the twitching of his mouth ceased, and the thin lips, curiously wrinkled, set themselves in a pallid, sweetish smile. The four men watched him, and a terror crept up in their hearts. Don Pedrarias rose suddenly, called upon his secretary to make ready, and began the dictation of a letter to his Trusted Lieutenant and Beloved Son Vasco

Remains of Aztec Grandeur

Nuñez de Balboa, in which he, Don Pedrarias, humbly besought his most valiant captain to hold off his departure and his conquest for a few days, and to come with speed to Acla, that his governor might again rejoice in his presence, and that certain matters touching nearly the fortunes of the colony might be amicably discussed between them. A fair message, surely, and beaming with courtesy and love. Yet the four men who heard its silken phrases fall from the old man's lips, and who waited in agony for the scratching of the secretary's pen, were in no wise warmed or comforted by it.

When it was done, the governor signed it with a flourish, folded it, patted it, and sealed it with his own shaking hands.

This letter brought Vasco Nuñez to Acla, though, when he received it, he shared the misgivings of Estévan over its sincerity. Fulvia was strongly opposed to his obedience, but her fears were founded, he knew, upon her conception of the official betrothal to the governor's daughter, and upon her own vague and mystical forebodings, rather than upon any real danger which she could apprehend. Balboa, knowing well the fact that Pedrarias never intended that the betrothal should be more than a formal excuse for peace between them, and half doubting, in his own mind, the very existence of the maid in the Spanish convent, paid little attention to her terrors. The betrothal he knew had its dangers: Don Pedrarias would seize on a word of contempt of it as an act of war. Beyond this, he saw in it

nothing to forego the expedition for. Pedrarias, he knew, might have some real need for his advice; better to go, he decided, than to risk the governor's displeasure.

At the actual moment of starting, Fulvia grew so desperate in her desire to keep him, and so vehement in her distrust of the governor, that Estévan agreed to change his plan, and stay to care for her during his commander's absence. This was as well, for had Balboa looked about for some one in whose care he could leave her, he might have been hurt at the disappearance of several men whom he trusted, Pizarro among them. It was, therefore, with the melancholy prophecies of his wife in his ears, and with a dull resentment at the delay in his heart, that he took the road for Acla.

Meanwhile, Luis Botello and his little party had been detained on one excuse and another, and the iron and pitch had not been started on the trail. After two days of these tactics, the governor quietly ordered the four men arrested and imprisoned, and then apparently forgot all about them.

As he approached Acla, Balboa met Pizarro coming out, with a dozen men at his back.

"I am sorry to tell you, Vasco Nuñez," said Pizarro, "that I must put you under arrest."

"It is not thus that you have been wont to meet me," said Balboa.

"I am only carrying out the orders of the governor," Pizarro returned, and as he spoke, he loosened his sword in

A Native Palace at Teotihuacan

the sheath. Balboa observed the motion, and a pang of dread shot through him.

"I am not accustomed to resist a lawful authority, Francisco. You know that. You remember the night Don Pedrarias landed?"

"I remember," said Pizarro, his face flushing heavily.

"What is the charge against me?"

"Treason against the governor and the Crown."

"My friend, of all the men in Darien, no one knows better than you how sorely I have been tempted to this very thing; or how utterly I have been innocent."

"I am now," Pizarro observed coldly, "in the service of Don Pedrarias."

They rode silently into Acla, and Vasco Nuñez was lodged in the alcalde prison, under heavy guards. The next day they brought him out for court-martial and the four men who had come on his errand the week before with him. There was nothing of the form or justice that had marked his trial before Espinosa, three years before. No friends to speak for him, no great churchman to bring him the weight and comfort of his spiritual position. Before the trial began, its outcome was known and freely foretold. The man who had listened in the shelter of the porch, brought over by the governor's secret agents, testified; Andres Garavito, urged on by hate and madness, swore to his former commander's scorn of the governor's daughter, and the shame of his life with an Indian woman who had bewitched him away from Holy Church. Don Pedrarias listened, nodded, and addressed Balboa:

"I rejoice," he said, "that I have discovered in time the black treason of you, and the scorn in which you hold me and mine. I have loved and trusted you as a son, and I now find you to be a secret and abhorrent traitor to me and to his gracious Majesty, the King of Spain. I now cast

Off the West Coast of Mexico

you off from my affections, and look upon you as you have shown yourself to deserve — as an enemy to me and to the State."

Balboa's reply was simple and brief. He had not yet come to realize fully the disaster which had overtaken him, so suddenly had he been cast down from the hills of aspiration to this pit of gloom.

"Don Pedrarias, you wrong me," he argued. "Had I been guilty, what could have lured me here, into your power? Had I meditated rebellion, what withheld me? I had four ships, ready to weigh anchor. I had three hundred men, and an open sea before me. What had I to do but to spread sail and press forward? I was sure of the lands I sought to conquer in your service — in the King's service — in the cause of the Cross — "

"I will permit no blasphemy in this court," interjected the governor, in a deadly voice.

"Yet I came here at your command, because I hoped to be useful to you. I came here without hesitation, without fear, and in perfect loyalty. Am I to be condemned on the word of a madman and a spy? Have my services earned me nothing? Is there to be no testimony from my friends?"

"As the lieutenant of the King, I can only deal justice to you," said Pedrarias. "You may call witnesses, and the court shall examine them."

"Then let Luis Botello be heard."

The governor's face did not change. "The witness you call is an attainted traitor, known and condemned," he objected. "I cannot call upon a convicted felon to save his principal. Is there any other?"

Where, in that hour, were the friends who had pledged their lives to Balboa, the men who had followed him, the companions of his triumphs and toils? Not one was there to speak for his life, not one to bear testimony to his loyalty,

not one to hearten him against the dark injustice of his end. Pizarro was there, and was silent; to speak might have cost him dear, and the verdict was too plain. Pizarro was no coward, but neither was he one to risk anything for a friend who faced the scaffold. The old man in the embroidered hauberk, the grey rat with rheumy eyes, who smiled and scowled and twitched in his chair — his will was upon them, and the court waited in silence.

Vasco Nuñez towered between his guards, his long hair falling around his face, brown and seamed with exposure, his gaze fixed upon his judge. Men looked from one to the other.

"Don Pedrarias," Balboa said at last, "you have willed that I am to die. For what reason, I know not. I never did you wrong. I have lived as I might, a Christian man, and have served you. You have feared me. It is your fear that drives you now. Speak my sentence, and have done."

"You speak, even now, as an approved traitor. You say I have feared you — nonsense, man. There cannot be two men in authority, and authority cannot fear its subject — that would be treason. Enough." He turned to the clerk. "Write," he said, "the sentence I pronounce against the accused, in the name of the King."

In the silence the words fell, phrase by phrase, and the swift pen traced the instrument of a true man's death. Chill and irrevocable words! Sped with hatred, they admitted nothing of pity, nothing of delay. Before the sunset, they decreed, the head of Vasco Nuñez must fall.

The sentence was obeyed. In the square at Acla, surrounded by the governor's men, Balboa and his four friends met the headsman. Luis Botello, a strong man, wept for his master's death, and prayed for him, forgetting himself, almost, in the pain and futility of his grief. Francisco

Garavito, stunned and shamed at his brother's treachery, hid his face, and would not look his captain in the eyes. While the sheriff read the sentence and his warrant, the five men knelt and waited. The confessor spoke with them, briefly, one at a time, and the executioner busied himself with his grisly preparations. A drizzling rain was falling, and there was some question about the hour of sunset — a

Spanish Desolation at Michtlan

question which was soon answered by a messenger from the governor. It was all so grim, so desolate, so wretched an end for one who had dreamed and planned — ay, and followed — an Olympian destiny.

The sheriff read off the names, and the men got up, stiffly, one by one, each of them saying, as a blind was folded over his eyes, "Good bye, captain." Luis Botello bade him farewell by his name, saying, "Good bye, Vasco Nuñez." The lad, Francisco Garavito, could not speak, and when he arose, Balboa called out to him, "Good bye, Francisco, my friend." The youth straightened himself at the word, and died with a defiant smile on his lips.

"Vasco Nuñez de Balboa," twanged the nasal voice of the sheriff.

"Ready," said Balboa.

On the trail to the camp where the fleet lay, Andres Garavito urged his horse that night, and while the beast lived, he babbled along in the rain, his head bare and his wet locks wild about his face. When the horse failed, he went on afoot, still babbling, and mingling broken love-songs with threats and cries and passionate love-words, flung out, without reason, into the wilderness night.

An Ancient Church in Old Mexico

CHAPTER XI

THE FLIGHT FROM PERIL

NO news reached the camp where the little fleet lay, but a series of petty misfortunes kept Estévan on the alert. It was as though, since the life of the enterprise had gone out, the very timbers of the ships felt the shadow, even while the men were still unconscious of it. Fulvia, it is true, had in some strange fashion a message more definite and more terrifying. All day she sat in a corner, wide-eyed and sullen, clasping her child, and saying, when urged to speak, that her lord was dead, and she had seen him so; with that would come a moment of voiceless horror, and she would close her eyes, and pass her hand along her throat, trembling. This foreboding of hers depressed Estévan's spirits so much that he was scarcely himself, and he grew absurdly solicitous about the welfare of the fleet; about a week after Balboa's departure, a storm coming up suddenly, he went out in a canoe to visit the ships, to inspect the anchors and lashings with his own eyes.

The inspection took longer than he expected, the heavy swell in the bay making the boarding of the caravels difficult. The night was far gone when he returned to Balboa's camp-house, his strength exhausted by labor and long watching. As he approached the house, however, he was startled by the sound of voices. His first thought was that Balboa had returned, and a great wave of relief swept over him as he opened the door-flap.

Entering, he came face to face with a haggard man, in torn raiment, who leaned over the table at him, between two burning candles, and rattled a heavy dagger hilt along

the hewn mahogany. In this gaunt, aggressive, travel-stained wretch, he recognized an old comrade, — Andres Garavito; another moment, and he had some inkling of the situation, for Fulvia came creeping around him, holding her child to her breast, and eyeing the wild figure fearsomely. Once she found herself behind Estévan, she breathed again, but never once took her gaze off Garavito's face.

Thinking to appeal at once to the man's military habit, Estévan spoke sharply and with a voice of authority. "Garavito," he said, "I am waiting for your report. Why have you been absent without leave?"

At the tone of command, Garavito straightened up for a moment, but the instinctive obedience was almost immediately overcome by the defiance of his mad undertaking. That moment, however, gave him an interval of clear speech, and he stated his intentions with terrible distinctness.

"I have no report to make, and you have no authority over me. Balboa is dead." At the word, the fellow's empty hand swept round his head with a loose, reckless gesture, and he smiled abominably. Estévan took a step back, and

Life in Tropical central America

reached for his arms. Garavito's smile hardened into a grin, and his lips twitched. "I have come for the woman," he said. "He would n't give her to me before, and now I 've come for her. And the Señor Vasco Nuñez, El Capitan, will not forbid me. Stop, Estévan. You are unarmed, and I have this — you see. I have run a long way in the rain. Do not compel me to kill you."

"Silence!" shouted Estévan.

Fulvia started for the doorway, and he took a step in the same direction to protect her escape. With an inarticulate cry, Garavito plunged forward. The table went over with a crash, and they were left in darkness.

Garavito's fall was in the direction of the door-flap, and he struggled to his feet before the others could grope their way to it; at his exclamation of triumph, they sheered away, Estévan trying to keep between Fulvia and the man with the knife. The gloom was complete and impenetrable. The sky was overcast, the night rainy and sullen, and the little fire in the corner hearth carefully covered with ashes. For a few moments they crept back and forth, and no one spoke, a tense fear holding them silent. As Garavito had said, Estévan was unarmed, and the dagger was the only weapon in the room. The only safety lay in the possibility of an escape through the doorway, and to do this it was needful that the pursuer be lured away from the opening.

They knew that he was not standing guard continuously, for they heard his footsteps and his eager, tumultuous breathing. Once they heard his foot strike a piece of the table, and they knew that the ramshackle thing had been broken in his fall. This gave Estévan another idea, and he began a stealthy manœuvering to secure a billet of wood from the wreck. In this he might easily have been successful, but for a new danger which threatened. The child began to cry out.

Her first terrified plaint brought a rush from Garavito, and Estévan intercepted it at the expense of a wound in the left arm. Fulvia put her hand over the child's mouth, but the little one, now thoroughly frightened, would not be stilled. The desperate game of blind man's buff was on again, and now Estevan began shouting to drown the voice of the child; the madman, thoroughly bewildered, rushed hither and thither, striking and cursing. One of his rushes took him into the corner where the smothered fire lay, and his heedless feet, slipping along the hearth, scattered the cloaking ash and sent a few faint glowing coals flying over the earthen floor. The light, pale as it was, changed the conditions in a thrice.

Fulvia darted from the door instantly. Estévan reached for a billet of wood, but even as he stooped for it he saw that he would be too late. Without rising, he flung the stick across the path of Garavito, who struck it, stumbled, and fell headlong, the knife under him. Estévan pounced upon him before he could stir, but the gurgling flow of warm blood from a great stab in the neck told him nothing more was needed. He turned over the body, and the fellow gasped, tried to raise his head, put his hand to the wound, and spoke, laboring for breath.

The first blood-flow seemed to calm his madness, and for a few minutes he was clearly conscious. From his gaspings Estévan made out clearly that his news of Balboa's death was sure, and that the man before him had had a hand in it, but the memory of the distraught and ruined brain was too weak for any definite communication, other than a confused and rambling confession that spoke of some driving, inexorable love, and of a remorse that was too deep for any prayer to heal. The scattered coals had not wholly fallen dark when the last of the life ebbed out.

Estévan scraped together the fire, threw on some twigs

and dried grass, and relighted the candles. No sooner had he done so than Fulvia, hunted back again by her fear of the night and her gratitude to her husband's friend, crept under the door-flap.

To Estévan, the news had come in such threatening guise and with such imperative obligations to action, that he had not thus far considered its significance to himself, and to the mother and child he had risked his life to defend. He knew from Garavito's ravings that Balboa had met his end through some legal process, or at least of legal form. The same peril naturally threatened himself, and it was clear that the woman could only be protected by flight. But flight, in the circumstances, was not easy. They were nine days' march from the nearest Atlantic port; and there the authorities were against them. The trail could not be followed, and he had no sure knowledge that any of the men would support him. For his own part, it might be better to wait. Yet he knew that the hatred which must have overridden the law to bring Balboa to his death would not scruple to make an end of him, especially as he thought how awkward it would be for Pedrarias if he should, by some happy chance, find his way to Spain and report what he knew to the Cardinal Ximenez. All manner of futile plans swept through his brain, but the one obvious thing

Inner Moat of old Morro Castle at Santiago de Cuba

to do was to sound the men of the camp before deciding on his course.

Putting on his sodden cloak again, and taking Fulvia and the child with him, he waded down the dark, miserable little street and knocked at the door-post of the hut where his lieutenant, Rameos, slept. Rameos came to the door, and they held a whispered consultation. There were sounds inside the hut, and Rameos led the way out from the door to a point where they could not be overheard. The man betrayed no surprise at the news of Balboa's execution, but immediately began to inquire about Estévan's future movements.

Then Estévan found out, for the first time, how light had been the tenure of the expedition, and that the snapping of one thread, the life of its leader, was enough to make it all collapse. A panic was upon the men; the way was held too dangerous, and the goal too uncertain; it was plain, too, that the strength of the plan had been sapped from behind, and that the camp was filled with men who were ready to go back to Acla, creeping home like whipped hounds, as from some treasonous conspiracy. The hand of Pedrarias was old and crafty; he had run no risk of stirring up a beehive by making away with one man, but had drawn the stings of the whole swarm. Rameos was open and frank in his talk with Estévan, but he was not minded to commit himself to any act which might displease the governor.

"I tell you, Estévan," he said simply, "you may do as you like, but I take no risks for the sake of a dead man. If you will submit to the governor, and go back and be silent, you may escape the hangman. Not otherwise. Do not think you can cherish the old view and live. I was loyal to Vasco Nuñez, and I am your friend, but I warn you."

"Rameos, we have served him equally. Here is his wife — and his child. What is to become of them?"

"Don't be a fool, Estévan."

"You have not answered me."

"I cannot answer you. I cannot take any risk in the matter."

"You mean that you will let Pedrarias sell them into slavery and do nothing to prevent it."

"I cannot prevent it."

"I cannot permit it."

"One word, Estévan. I do not know what is in your mind, but I am certain of this. Your own life is safe only if you submit, utterly, and perhaps not then. If you are minded to burden yourself with this woman, it must be at your own risk. You know where the horses are stabled. But for God's sake do not tell me what you intend, and then I shall not be tempted when the governor's people come. The most I can do is to promise that I will put them off your track."

"Good night, Rameos."

"Good night, Estévan. God be with you."

Rameos went back to his hut. Estévan saddled two horses, and they set off up the trail. As the dawn began to make a cold tint of greyness in the dark rain, they stopped, dismounted, and drove the horses back. Wading a short way in a chilling stream, they turned aside and plunged into the wood, following a rough trail to the southeastward.

When Hernando Estévan took this decisive step, he had in mind only the terrible necessity of his position, and he went into the jungle believing it to be the less of two perils, but even so, an undertaking more dangerous than any he had ever known. The temper of the Indian peoples had never been fully understood, in his previous experience with them, and he had always looked upon Balboa's trust

in them as a sort of inspired folly. But the face of necessity was implacable. He could not stay, adding to his own risk the certain fate of his captain's child and the woman his captain had loved. He could not deliver her to the Indians and then go back, since he would thus assure his own condemnation. And under it all he cherished a vague plan of appealing to some sovereign authority, and in some way thus of bringing down justice upon the murderers of his friend.

Not the least of the hardships of the journey was the feeling, very keen in a man who had spent so much of his life under discipline, that he was now, in a sense, rebelling against official authority. The journey itself was not so difficult, and at no time after the morning when they left the horses and took to the stream were they without Indian guides and helpers. The hospitality of all the tribes was open to Careta's daughter and the wife of the great captain, and it was not until they came within a half-day's journey of Santa Maria that any fear of immediate arrest came over them.

Then, too, the ultimate disposal of Fulvia and her child had to be faced.

Going in at night, and with great caution, Estévan gained entrance to the house of Colmenares without being discovered; by good fortune, he found his old comrade at home, and in a few moments had laid before him his situation, and the undertaking upon which he was engaged. With the assistance of his host, he might be able to transport himself and Fulvia to Cuba, and there they would be reasonably safe from pursuit. To this plan Colmenares gave some encouragement. The rumors of De Avila's displacement were frequent, and it must soon come, he said.

In the hours between midnight and dawn, Estévan went out again, and brought Fulvia in, so that the morning

Morro Castle in Santiago de Cuba

found them all comfortably hidden in Colmenares's house. There for a few days they remained, until, chance favoring, they crept aboard a ship sailing for Hispaniola. It was not until they had left the mainland far behind that Fulvia's sullen courage broke, and the gloom of her banishment came over her. For after all her struggle, she returned to the primal conviction of her race. It was a mistake, she said, to leave her people and carry Balboa's child back to his own, since the Spaniards had only loved him enough to slay him. If she had kept the child with her, and gone back to her tribe, all might have been well, and Estévan would not have imperiled his life for hers. Up to this time she had followed him with a childish simplicity which never questioned, but now she began to see how her presence must necessarily endanger his escape.

At Santo Domingo, where they were held a few weary days awaiting a ship for Cuba, matters grew still more difficult, and it became imperative that Estévan proclaim the woman and child as his slaves in order to protect them. To this formality Fulvia agreed willingly enough, though the thought of it was a secret thorn in her heart; a strange form of the white man's law, — yet it made her, Careta's daughter and the great captain's wife, a slave. With this thought, and the malarial airs of Hispaniola, she fell ill. A fortnight passed, and Estévan landed in Havana unfollowed, carrying in his arms a girl child, who clung to him and wept for the mother who had been left, still and cold, in the little plot outside the church at Santo Domingo. For even this much of Christian hospitality Estévan was grateful, even though it had been granted because the dead woman had been baptized, rather than because she was Balboa's wife, — an ironical greeting at the last for Fulvia, who had been in her own right a princess, and in her heart a pagan. Pitiless had been Balboa's tragedy. In the

child who survived him, lay the mark of it, irremediably graven; but of that Estévan was to know nothing until after many years.

Landing in Havana gave him new hope; brought him home from peril and toil, to peace and the sweeter thrills of peace; he looked about the old, familiar harbor with a great swelling of joy in his soul. Back to Christina and his little son Christopher, and to Las Casas, and to all those he most loved and cherished had he come. As he thought of it, he fell a-dreaming for the time, musing happily on the welcome that awaited him. The Isthmus, the desolate voyage, even the fall of Balboa, were forgotten in the gladness of this homecoming. With impatience he waited for the ship to come to anchor.

It was still early morning. After interminable delays, as it seemed to the eager man on the forward deck, the ship made her landing. At last his foot touched earth once more. In his arms, holding her carefully, he bore the still sleeping Vasca, who nestled her head close against his shoulder. Still on her cheeks lay the traces of the last night's tears for the mother she would not see again. Estévan, looking neither to right nor left, strode straight onward toward his home, to the little white house on the brow of the first ridge, overlooking the bay.

The mist had just cleared away, and the town lay before him, still and sparkling in the clear light of sunrise, when he gained the crest of the hill. Just as he did so, the child stirred in his arms, and wakened.

"Good morrow, little daughter," cried Estévan cheerfully. "I take thee to a new mother now, who will love thee well!"

Together they looked forward and beyond, where the white walls of the little house gleamed in crimson dawn. As they drew nearer, a misgiving smote him; as they approached

the gate, he saw the fresh, untrampled grass, newly sprung in the warm rains, in the pathway. Fear clutching at him, he rushed forward. As he would have passed the gate, a shiver seized him; his eyes filled.

He set the child down, and brushed away the mist from his eyes; with an unutterable sinking at the heart, his hand was laid upon the heavy door of the house. His knock resounded hollowly; died away.

He shook the door; it groaned creakingly; and again all was silence. At his feet he beheld the sandstone threshold green with moss; swift vines choked the iron hinge; and across the lock of the door lay, like a blotch of blood, a great seal of red wax.

The house was empty.

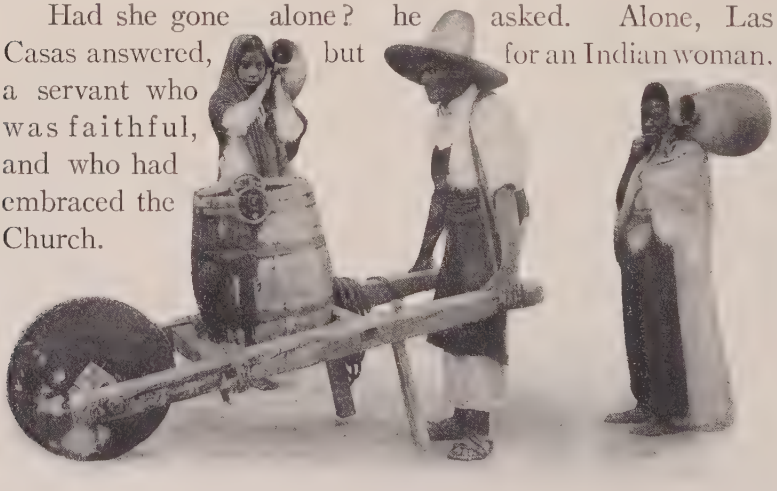
A View near Santiago de Cuba

CHAPTER XII

A QUEST WITHOUT A CLUE

WHAT happened to Hernando Estévan immediately after he turned away from the sealed door of his house, that misty morning in the year of grace, 1517, was never wholly clear in his memory. He knew that he found Las Casas that day, and that the good priest had with him a child, a brown-haired boy, — Estévan's son, over whom he wept in the desolation of his heart. He knew that Fra Bartholomew told him of Christina, a simple story enough, but one which gripped him now as with talons: how Martin Orelva had come with a token, and had reported her husband down with a lingering fever; how she had gone with Orelva, stricken with grief and fear, hastening to the side of the man she loved; how she had left her child with the good monk — and beyond this, nothing. The heathen world had sent no message back.

Had she gone alone? he asked. Alone, Las Casas answered, but for an Indian woman, a servant who was faithful, and who had embraced the Church.



Hernando took up his sword, left the two children with the good father, and went out.

Slowly the consciousness of the truth beat in upon him, and the portent of it took shape. A traitor had lured away his wife, and the trackless Indies had swallowed them both. There remained to him a search, a rescue, and a revenge. The wandering that had been his pleasure and his toil, became now his inexorable necessity.

Gradually, as he turned the matter over in his mind, the condition which confronted him became clear. It was essential that his search be comparatively secret, since his own honor and his wife's name required it to be so. Some fortunate chance, some slip to safety or access of contrition, might have occurred. He could make inquiries for Martin Orelva, circumspectly; but he could not safely admit his ignorance of Christina's whereabouts. From the beginning his pursuit must be carefully guided, discreetly planned. But the clue for the beginning was in no wise disclosed. He ran over in his mind the probabilities of Orelva's course, and no one seemed more likely than another. If his token to Christina had been convincing, his story of Estévan's illness must have been convincing also; it must have smitten her with dread and grief, so that she would be as ready to follow him to one place as another, without thought of treachery. And where, in the known or unknown worlds, might they have gone?

From Cuba, assuming that they left the island, there were frequent ships to Hispaniola. This seemed improbable, since by such a course their destination would inevitably be revealed to Christina before they had gone far; and, once landed, there were too many friends in Santo Domingo to whom she might appeal for protection. To Spain there were also ships, and this course was possible, but its difficulties were obvious. Landing in an old and

Christian land, the helpless woman would be preserved, even if the treachery of the man could be concealed from her on the voyage. Her secrecy might have been arranged easily enough, on the other hand, if they sailed toward the west or south, since a hint of Estévan's peril from the governor's disfavor would have been sufficient for that. So the searcher reasoned, and gradually a logical basis for the pursuit worked itself out in his mind.

His enemy would choose a place far from the common precincts of authority. The mainland for that. He would not be likely to go by way of Hispaniola. But the sailings, like the explorations of the day, divided at Hispaniola, working southward in one great stream from that point to Darien and the Pearl Coast, and northward and westward in another stream, more perilous and less populous, by way of Cuba. He thought of the strange map he had seen Balboa burn, and saw where the two streams might some day meet; for he believed, as Balboa had, that the mainland was continuous, impassable, from the narrow isthmus they had crossed together, up to the land of Easter, the Florida of Ponce de Leon's fountain.

So he had first to seek along the coast line of an unknown continent, Asia, or whatever land it might be, and the islands that lay along this coast. The task compelled him; tears and curses and vows were vain things not to be indulged, while the task stood undone.

By the nearest reckoning he could make, from the date Las Casas gave him, he was aware that Orelva had nearly three weeks the start of him. But even so, with the slow means of communication then in use, Orelva might not have heard of Balboa's fall, or be in any way prepared for a pursuit. Estévan immediately began his inquiries, veiled questions and examinations, among the officers of ships then in port, and of the men along the water-front of the settle-

A Street Scene in Spanish America

ment. Now and then his heart leapt at a rumor or a suspicion, but the fact that Orelva had gone silently was soon made clear to him. So he wandered, going again and again to Santiago, and even taking passage once for Hispaniola. All to no purpose. But once, as he came back to Santiago from a fruitless chase into the interior, he saw a ship coming in from the westward, a weed-covered, storm-beaten caravel, with marks of fire and bruises on her sides, and arrow-holes through her sails; a ship that had just come in from some desperate venture, and still bore the scars of it.

Among the men from this caravel he recognized several he had known at Santa Maria and later at Acla, and among these he found his old friend Bernal Diaz de Castillo, a fellow of some scholarship, but a rover by disposition.

"Bernal," Estévan asked casually, "whence comes your caravel, that she shows such a scratched face?"

Diaz looked at him curiously, and led him apart from the crowd at the landing. "I take it," he said slowly, "that we have each something to say to the other. Were you not with Balboa?"

This Estévan admitted, and briefly narrated the circumstances of his escape from the ruin of the expedition. "But now," he concluded, "I am not immediately interested in the finding of the Golden Kingdom, but in some business I have with Martin Orelva, whom you know. Can you tell me where he is to be found?"

Bernal shook his head doubtfully.

"You have been to the mainland?" Estévan persisted.

"Yes."

"Is it possible that he may have gone there, and are there any settlements where he might be found?"

Diaz hesitated. "It seems your business is urgent, since you are willing to go there for him."

"It is more urgent than I can tell you. Can you assist me?"

"It may be that I can; or it may be otherwise. There are some settlements, but none of them can last out the rains. They will all be back again, like foiled hawks, when the clear weather ends." He turned and looked squarely in Estévan's eyes. "My friend," he said gravely, "you were a man of the same sort as Vasco Nuñez once. You were a seeker of seaways and gold and the kingdoms of the East. Now you sit here with me, who am just come back from the strangest voyage any of us ever sailed, and you ask me nought but 'Where is Martin Orelva?' What ails you, man?"

Estévan, thus pressed, dissembled swiftly. "In God's name, Bernal," he exclaimed, "tell me your story, since I see that I can in no wise escape it."

With which invitation, if one might consider it such, Diaz launched forth on his chronicle, being so constituted that no battles, or wanderings, or any of the occupations of his life gave him pleasure equal to the recounting of them. He told, therefore, of the company that had been sent up to Cuba from Darien in the previous winter, because of the shortness of provisions; and how he himself, with Córdova and the pilot Antonio de Alaminos, had fitted out a little expedition for slave-catching along the Honduras Bay; and how the Governor Velásquez had added a ship of his own, but because the work was illicit, they had called the expedition one of discovery.

"And so we set out," said Bernal, "with Córdova in command, who is, as we all know, a man of courage and prudence, and much inclined to the killing and kidnaping of the heathen natives. But when we put in at Puerto Principe, old Alaminos, our pilot, being set astir by the reading of our papers, and that we were sailing as discoverers, began to grumble. 'Here is our favorable omen, Córdova,' he exclaimed. 'I am minded to take you for a

voyage of discovery in right earnest. For I remember well what the old Admiral Don Christopher said, when he sailed out the fourth time, that there were lands worth seeing within three days' sail of this island, if one went straight to the westward, and then coasted to the right instead of the left. To the right, mark you — up the coast.' With this talk he so worked upon us all that Córdova sent word to the governor, and got him permission, and an appointment as lieutenant-general of any new lands we might find. With that we sailed—coasting to the right. And lo! there was land, even as Alaminos said."

Ready for Market

"I know," said Estévan. "Vasco Nuñez had heard of it."

"Ay, and we have seen it," said Bernal, lowering his voice and looking out over the bay, where the boats were still plying to and from the disfigured caravel. "We have seen it, and it is a beautiful, bitter land, where the heathen hate us. But look you, they are not quiet cattle, these heathen, like the slaves in Hispaniola, or the tribes we conquered in Darien." Bernal moved nearer to his listener, and spoke more confidentially than ever.

"Along that coast they have temples of stone, built high like the pyramids of the old Egyptians, with steps of stone all about them. And the people wear garments of cotton, quilted, and cloaks of bright colors, and gay plumes.

What does this mean, think you? Gold they have, too, and writing of a sort, and rites we have never seen. What means this, my Hernando? Have we struck the golden way after all, and does it lie to the north and westward?"

"It may be that you have," admitted Estévan, kindling a little.

"We took two young boys, and set about training them for interpreters; so very quickly we had some few words that might be understood. These people speak a new tongue, quite different from the Darien tribes. In two weeks we came to a place they call Campeche, and here the priests and the people came out by thousands, and bade us enter the town. We were amazed at what we saw — strange temples of great size, and carvings, like mighty twisted serpents at the doorways, and everywhere multitudes of men and women, come in to get a look at us, and all of smiling, careless countenance. But in the temples, the rounded altars of green stone were wet and steaming with fresh blood."

"How long did you remain?"

"We did not remain. The priests came forth, a great company of them, with swinging censers that fairly reeked of some pagan sweetness, and bade us go on our way. So we left them."

"Tell me," Estévan asked, thinking the answer might serve as a guide in his own quest, "had these natives seen Spaniards before?"

"It may be and it may not. They were hostile, and they called us, at some places, 'Castilians,' speaking as though they knew the word; yet they looked at us with wondering eyes."

For a moment both were silent, gazing out across the water to the boats and the toilers on the caravel. With some disturbance among the boatmen, they noticed a man

on a pallet was let down over the side very tenderly, and those who took him in the boat below leaned over him, hovering and pitiful.

"Poor Córdova," said Bernal, sadly. "He is fairly riddled with arrows."

"There was fighting, then?"

"Ay, at a place they called Champoton, where we went in for water. A headlong fight in the marshes, and never a man of us but they scratched, while the half of our force never reached the boats again. As I told you — it 's a bitter land."

In a Public Park in Spanish America

Bernal drew from his pouch a quaintly carved little image of translucent green stone, and showed it to Estévan, and gloated over it, remarking how like it was to similar toys he had seen brought from oriental lands by the Portuguese. In this speculation and controversy he took great interest, but Estévan paid little heed to it, since his mind was busy with calculations of dates and distances, and his hungry spirit was following, through all the journeyings of Bernal's tale, the track of a man who might have gone the same way — a man who had done him a wrong, and whom he had vowed to seek out, whatsoever seas might rage or smile between them.

CHAPTER XIII

THE EMPTY WORLD

IT was not the same thing, in those days, to imagine a course, and to follow it. It was easy to declare one's intention to visit an unknown shore, but that was only the beginning of the matter; only the slow-moving authority of the government could make that visit possible.

To Estévan, at outs as he was with Governor Velásquez, the journey to the mainland was impossible. His heart, beating with mingled hope and dread, kept urging him thither; but in no way could he find an avenue open. The story of Córdova's disastrous but alluring quest was by now gone well abroad, and Estévan began to hope that Fate was swinging toward his ends. Soon he learned that the rumor was true; that an expedition of four caravels was to sail from Santiago,— their quest the coast of gold. And one of the caravels was under the command of Estévan's old friend and comrade, Pedro de Alvarado. Two days later Estévan had enrolled himself in Alvarado's company; and before the end of April, 1518, the fleet set sail, turning their prows to westward.

The wind blew fresh; the heavens were never more deeply blue; the sun danced upon the water. The men of the ships danced, too, and all was cheer and high hope; the voyagers felt certain that great goals awaited them; and they looked with buoyant eagerness for the first signs of land. The expedition was under the command of Juan de Grijalva; he was a youngish man of good address but no especial ability, his chief qualification for leader being the fact that he was the nephew of Governor Velásquez.

To Estévan, brooding on the thought of Christina, each hour was as ten.

The land lay sweet in the eyes of all. Clinging close to the Yucatan shore, they skirted first north, then westward. They found the coast as Diaz had described it; they followed closely in the track of the unfortunate Córdova.

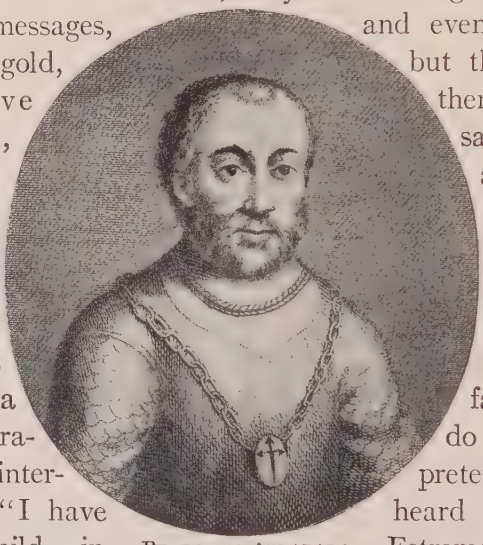
CORTEZ (*From the portrait in the National Museum of Mexico*)

At Champoton they met the tribe which had vanquished their predecessors. Another battle took place, Alvarado vowing to avenge the Spaniards who had there been slain, — and the natives, bold from their former victory, seeking captives for their thirsty gods.

But the white men were better prepared this time, and the altars never received their captives. Instead, the invaders ascended the temples, flung down the images, and set upon them heavy wooden crosses, so that, far out at

sea, they looked back and saw the symbols they had left, dark figures against the sky above the mysterious pyramids.

In June, they came to the territory of another chief, a friendly old cacique called Tobasco, and here they were more than ever convinced of the fact that they were in new lands, and among peoples far more advanced than the natives they had known along the southern coast, or among the islands. With Tobasco, Grijalva exchanged gifts and courteous messages, and even traded a little for gold, but the cacique could give them little of the metal, saying it all came from a great King to the northward, who ruled over many cities, and roofed his houses with it.



PEDRO DE ALVARADO

"This tale of the roof hath a familiar ring to it," Alvarado exclaimed, when the interpreters translated it. "I have heard it since I was a child, in Estremadura. It was greatly easier for me to believe it then."

"I believe it, now," said Grijalva. "These folk have no cause to lie about such a matter."

"The heathen require none," said Pedro, scornfully. "You are young, señor, in the ways of the unchristian world."

"Be that as it may," rejoined Grijalva, biting his lip, "this fellow is telling the truth."

Alvarado bowed ironically. "Be it so," he observed. "I have seen roofs of thatch, and of stone, and roofs villainously rimmed with men's heads rotting on pike-staffs; but of gold — never. Still, if you insist —"

A whiff of breeze from off the temples, where the sacrifices had been made the day before, assailed their nostrils as he spoke, and Grijalva did not pursue the unprofitable dispute. All their battlefields had not inured Alvarado and Estévan to the horrors of these temples, and Grijalva, being younger and comparatively inexperienced, shuddered at the thought of them. But the story of the great King, the feudal lord of all the villages to the north and west, persisted in the interviews with the natives all along the coast.

At a point a little farther up the coast, having cast anchor in a bay near a town called Mictlan-Quauhtla, they even met an official representative of the overlord of the land, one Pinotl, a tax-gatherer, who came fearlessly aboard their ships, and talked freely of his King and his wondrous, all-embracing dominions. At his talk, even Alvarado gave ear, and the Spaniards were more than ever convinced that the great Khan, or his immediate heir and successor, must be the employer of this facile collector of rates and tributes. And through all their talk and all their thoughts, waking or sleeping, a name began to sound and echo, a new and magical name, whispering of barbaric empire, redolent of spices and rich odors, a name with an elusive sense of gold and purple about it, the name of Montezuma, the King.

But while they were listening to tales of empires and golden roofs, and the despotisms which they took to be of the Orient indeed, the ships were going to rack and ruin in the damp and slackening climate along the coast; also their condition was not improved by frequent grounding on the shoals, and warping off at high tide. The men, too, felt the strain, and many were too ill for work. As Grijalva had started with a force of only about 250, this matter became serious. At an island where they anchored on Saint

John's Day, and which they called San Juan de Ulúa, sweetening the heathen appellation of the place with the blessed name of the saint, they paused and took account of their condition.

Alvarado reported ten men ill aboard his ship, Montejo thirteen, and the commander confessed to eighteen unfit for service. Altogether there were nearly fifty out of health in the little fleet. Grijalva, who had been more and more harassed by the heedless flings and jibes of Alvarado, had his remedy in hand.

"Gentlemen," he said, addressing the officers in council in his cabin, "it is now needful that our force divide. Captain Alvarado will take the sick on board his ship, and return to Cuba for more men and supplies. He will carry my letters to the governor, and return, if he so elects, with the new force. We have learned enough. It is now due us that we be given an army, and allowed to go ourselves to visit the great Montezuma."

"And what," queried Alvarado in an acid tone, "shall be done while I am gone to take your sick men home?"

"I shall continue up the coast with the other three caravels," Grijalva replied, "and you may find me easily enough when you return."

"Your ships will rot and fall apart under you before I return to your command," said Alvarado sternly. "When they come for you, they will find you under an awning, on a shoal island, starving."

"If that is your belief, you need not return," said Grijalva. "But for your present movements — you have my orders."

With that the council broke up. Estévan had himself transferred to Grijalva's own ship; his intention was to search the coast, rather than to take care of his own life. So Alvarado went back, and the others went on. They found the coast taking a gradual curve to the eastward again, and

The Port of Vera Cruz and the Ancient Castle of San Juan de Ulúa

eventually they passed the settlements where the name of Montezuma was spoken; at the same time they passed the templed towns, and came again among more savage tribes who showed fight at every landing. The condition of the ships grew more and more discouraging, and at last they had to turn back.

A glance at the rough chart of the coast which the pilots drew, working it out by the compass and their dead-reckoning, brought to Estévan's mind with sudden force the truth of Balboa's statements about the shape of the mainland, and the accuracy of the little map he had drawn from hearsay and conjecture; and all the way back along the coast he was reminded from time to time of chance phrases he had heard Vasco Nuñez let fall. It was fairly evident from all this that the man Pedrarias had officially murdered was possessed of the greatest fund of information about the land that there was anywhere in the settlements, and that this knowledge must now be won again, — bought with blood if necessary, — before the great work could be done.

All these were melancholy thoughts, and the lack of any evidence of Orelva's presence depressed Estévan still more. Grijalva, on the other hand, was jubilant, and when the fleet again breasted the open sea, homing for Cuba, he was convinced that his fortune was found, and only awaited his coming to fetch it in.

Grijalva counted too much upon his relationship to the governor, and had accomplished too little in the way of testimony to his powers as a leader. When they came into Santiago in November, they found that an expedition was already being organized for the conquest of Montezuma's dominions, and that it had been put under the command of the chief alcalde, Alvarado's close friend, and the one man of them all whom Estévan would himself have chosen — Hernando Cortez. Grijalva swore, and supplicated, and

sulked, but all to no purpose. Alvarado's report, though it had not swerved from the literal truth, had been a grim document, and Velásquez was not ready to encounter any charge of favoritism for the sake of seeing a kinsman fail in a great adventure.

After all, if he was not to have the great chance, young Grijalva might console himself with the memory of the work he had done, the work on which the conquest must inevitably be founded, and upon a piece of exploration of magnificent range and extent. Even if he had come back somewhat in disorder, with his ships racked and his men disabled, he had been by that showing more fortunate than Córdova. He had met no crushing disaster, and he had acquired a vast amount of information. But these reflections were slight comfort to him now, when he beheld Cortez riding about on the business of his expedition, with the smiling, yellow-haired Alvarado gloating openly over the turn of affairs.

Estévan saw Santiago with sad eyes. After all the weary miles, no hope could he find. It was as though Christina had vanished out of life; the world was as empty as the sky. Secretly, indomitably still, he pursued his inquiries after Orelva. For a short time he abode with Las Casas, who looked upon his silent grief with the deepest sympathy; but he was a busy man himself, this son of the Church, and he had but little time to aid his friend.

Estévan found that the young Christopher and Vasca de Balboa were being kindly cared for in Las Casas's own household; and for a few days he lingered there. Not for long, for the sight of Christina's eyes in her son gave him much sorrow as was not to be borne. The little Vasca, shyly passionate in her welcome, gave him the only comfort he had had; she had, now that he looked at her, a curious likeness to her great father. Her straight brows and dream-

ing eyes held Estévan's thoughts; and with a flash of his old courage he thought of the man whom he had followed up the peak of the world. Balboa would not give up hope, no matter in how evil case, — should Estévan fall short?

He had by this time searched carefully through the known places of the Indies, as he thought, and he was at a loss where next to turn. Still the gold coast called him;

The Castle of San Juan de Ulúa To-day

he could not rid his mind of the conviction that Orelva had gone to the western mainland, and his unsatisfactory and limited search with Grijalva had in effect only strengthened his belief. But how to get thither again himself? A way stretched out before him.

Riding on the highroad he met, on a somber morning, Pedro de Alvarado, who hailed him heartily, and stopped his horse at his side.

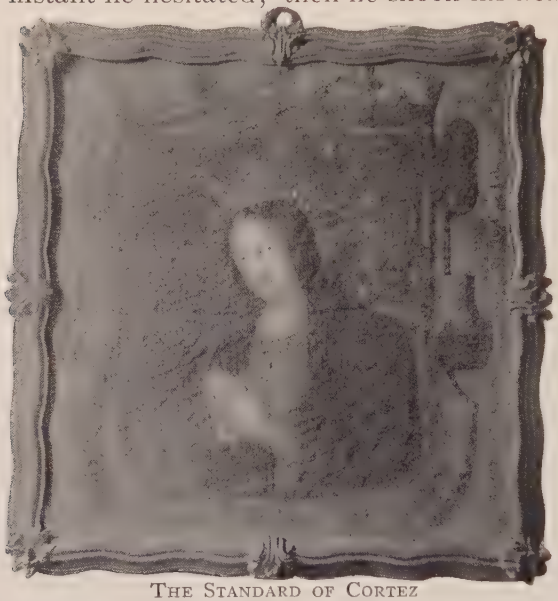
"I must have thine ear, man," cried Alvarado.

Estévan regarded him steadfastly, and nodded a quiet assent.

"Come with us to the taking of the Fleece!" he cried.

"Cortez begs thee come, and I, myself, will hear no other word! We sail in a fortnight!"

In spite of himself, Estévan's heart thrilled. This was great company; and their way lay westward. For an instant he hesitated; then he shook his head slowly, looking Alvarado gravely in the eye.



THE STANDARD OF CORTEZ

"It may not be; I cannot go; I have other courses."

But Alvarado, egged on by the hint of refusal, would take no denial; and in the end dragged the other back with him to talk with Cortez.

Cortez, his eye gleaming, cordially seconded his lieutenant's plea. In the end they so wrought, between them, that Estévan could find no other exit than the truth. Drawing Cortez aside, he told him of his quest, and the bitter search that he must keep. Cortez listened with level eyes.

"Come with me, friend," he said, when all was told. "You shall leave me when you will, to follow any clue that may be! Meanwhile, I shall have you of my fellowship. . . . And before I sail to westward, I shall scour these seas again, to recruit my companies. You may find him thus!"

Estévan hesitated a long moment. At length he raised his eyes. "I will come on those terms," he said simply.

In this wise he agreed to follow Cortez to the land of

Montezuma. And Alvarado laughed out his huge content till the rafters rang.

Cortez had his command of the expedition from the governor himself, and obtained it, apparently, for the mere asking; but back of the request was a considerable weight of influence, and the pique with which Velásquez regarded the efforts of Juan de Grijalva. Long before the men were recruited, or the ships made ready, the governor repented of his impulse. For the Cortez who began the work of the expedition was a different man, it seemed; no rollicking, devil-may-care young adventurer, recommended by his daring and his money, but a man of the full stature of a *conquistadore*, filled with the gravity of his task, ready with the authority of a soldier and the zeal of a crusader, Jason and Odysseus in one. With chagrin the governor beheld the miracle, so frequent in those stirring times, of a man transformed by his destiny.

Grijalva, when the fit of his wrath permitted, reminded his uncle of this folly. "You have given a mighty chance to a fellow who will use it well," he insisted. "I shall not be amazed if he comes back and buys your commission from the King, over your head. For myself, I should grudge him nothing. My own opportunities might improve."

"I have in my treasury," returned the governor, testily, "some six hundred copper hatchets, all bought as gold, which daily prove to me your worth as a counselor." This taunt, having acquired sting by repetition, was enough to silence the nephew's protests. But the governor's distrust of Cortez grew, and at last he came to a resolution. Better, he thought, to delay the expedition till a man could be found to lead it than to send it out with a man he feared. He forthwith wrote and signed an order revoking the commission he had granted to Cortez, and began casting over in his mind, referring to a list he ordered Duero, his secre-

tary, to make out, the men from whom he might choose a successor.

To Duero, the list was hint enough. To say that Cortez had bribed the secretary might be an injustice; the man had, perhaps, merely caught fire from the glow and enthusiasm of a dominant personality engaged in a momentous undertaking. The result was the same, however. With the midnight of that day, the secret orders of Cortez reached his officers, and the dawn found him all embarked, ready but unprepared. The governor, aroused by the watchers of the harbor, set forth to intercept him, and the signals from the shore waved furiously.

Cortez took a boat, and had himself rowed to a point within speaking distance of the beacon, where the governor stood, shivering in the morning wind, and awaited his coming in. But farther than this Cortez had no intention of going. Their colloquy was brief but decisive, the governor white with rage, Cortez airily polite, but resolute in his decision to sail in spite of the interruption.

Of all that the governor said, including the oral revocation of his commission, threats of death as a traitor, and various unclassified recriminations, nothing touched Cortez in the least, except, perhaps, the observation that his leave-taking was in a high degree discourteous; this reflecting in a manner upon the usages of his gentle blood, Cortez was inclined to resent. In former days, he would have replied in kind; but now, still arrogant, but scorning the old incivility, he made answer: "Time presses, and there are some things which should be done even before they are thought of. Has your Excellency any commands?"

Here spoke the new Cortez. Not the governor alone, but all the western world, might read whatever seemed fitting into the words.

CHAPTER XIV

THE MUSTERING OF THE ARGONAUTS

IF Cortez, stealing out of Santiago in the dawn, with the slender courtesy of an adventurer who leaves an innkeeper bawling for his unpaid score, was unprepared for the conquest of the Golden Empire, he had no intention of remaining so. Thirty miles up the shore he put in at

Panorama of Vera Cruz

Macaca, remained a few hours, and left with a hundred barrels of foodstuffs and a dozen volunteers. Next he put in at Trinidad, and finding that no word of his coming had been received there, he raised his velvet banner with the scarlet cross, and harangued the populace, offering them everything his fluent fancy could invent, and inviting strong men, who would not fear to battle with the heathen in the cause of Christ and the King, to join his triumphant enterprise.

The town seemed to catch fire from his indomitable inspiration. In Macaca he had gained a few men and a few supplies; but with these he had taken on a confidence that nothing could shake, and this, added to his natural buoyancy and personal charm, made him irresistible. For every man he had enlisted before, dozens now offered. He could pick and choose. In the matter of supplies he was even bolder.

Hernando Cortez

A ship came into harbor while he was drilling a company along the beach. He went to her in a boat, saw that she was loaded with good provisions and well found in the matter of guns, and forthwith annexed her to his fleet; his enthusiasm swept her along, captain, crew, and cargo, into the train of his holy expedition.

Santiago, Macaca, Trinidad, all gave aid; even the high seas were fruitful. Borne on the tide of their con-

quering faith, they rounded Cape San Antonio, and doubled back to Havana.

Estévan and Alvarado protested at this movement, as unnecessary and dangerous, since it was clear that nothing had stood in the way of a warning to the intendant at Havana, the governor's courier having had plenty of time to reach the town by land.

"And what if he has?" said Cortez. "I know the intendant well, and he is a young man named Barba, a sharp-nosed fellow, who would do anything for me."

"He will arrest you, most likely," said Alvarado, sulkily, "and we shall be left with all these madmen to lead — the Saints know where."

"Arrest me? Absurd! He has not above a hundred men in port, and I tell you he is a shrewd fellow," Cortez observed. "Besides, we may pick up another ship, and I have set my heart on at least six more horses. We will stop at Havana."

That settled the question. As the others had foretold, Barba had been warned; to be explicit, he had the governor's orders to detain Cortez if he should happen to visit Havana, and to inform him that his fleet was to be seized by the intendant, pursuant to the orders from Santiago, and that it was to be held until the commander of the expedition, who had not yet been appointed, should arrive. All of which Pedro Barba confided to Cortez in due form; on the occasion of it Cortez assembled his men along the square in front of the intendant's headquarters, and made them a speech.

"We are all," he began humbly, "merely the servants, the children, of the King and the Church. To their glories, we are as driven sparks in the burning of a city. But, however insignificant our fire, shall it die on the wind? Shall it be blown out to perish on the foam? Not so, for the pyre

awaits the brand, and the work of our people is to be done. For the King and the Church, then, let us spend our lives. For myself, I have chosen my path, and these others have chosen it with me." For the moment, he dropped his humility, and spoke with an air of utter frankness, throwing into his tone something that gave a confidential sound to it.

"Thirty leagues to the westward of this island is a land where the heathen rule; and up the shore we come into the dominions of a heathen King, him they call Montezuma, child of the sun. In wealth, this surpasses all the lands we have carried the Cross over. It is known and proved. Many among you have been in that land, and have seen the temples, and have smelled the abomination of the sacrifices of children, and have taken note of the women with golden bracelets, and the priests with the lore of Satan in their faces. We have given all we possessed to this mission, my comrades, and we have sworn to deliver this land from darkness, and the government of it to our lord the King. We have taken our commission from the Governor Velásquez, and I have sold mine own goods to buy ships, and to make ready for this sacred voyage.

"We know as well as may be that this conquest is not to be bought without labor, this glory is not to be won but with hardships and battles. For this we are ready. But here, behold, there is another word, for the governor, grown jealous of the renown he dares not win, now turns upon his pledge and honor, and calls us back to inactivity and shame. Yet of him I would say nothing unworthy, since he is great in authority, and his wisdom is doubtless beyond my understanding."

The wrathful murmur of the crowd told him he was on safe ground, and he continued more openly, the color coming into his pale, olive cheeks, his black beard bristling, and his eyes alight.

"Let me speak frankly to you, my brothers," he cried. "The matter lies with you. We may go on to our everlasting fame, or we may lay down our arms and submit to the recreant who has betrayed us. For me, I serve the King, and it is his work I am doing.

"Are you charitable men, and will you stand by while the victims of the infidel pour out their blood on the altars, and feed with their lives the fires of sin undying? Are you true seed of the Church, and do you shrink from the labors of the Cross?

CORTEZ EMBARKING FOR MEXICO

Have you sinned, and will you put aside the mighty service which shall earn you absolution? Are you poor men, and will you turn away from illimitable riches? Are you Spaniards? Does the memory of the sunlit villages among the hills, and the bell-notes floating from the church towers, and the laughter of the girls in the vineyards, and the memory of the rose odors in the gardens — Spain, Spain — does it mean nothing to you? If these things move you not, go your ways. But if your hearts still flame for the splendor of your King, for the land we have delivered from the Moorish oppressor, for the grace of the Holy Mother and the blood of Him who died upon the Cross, I call you. I command you! And in this faith we shall win to the deliverance of the

new land, even though it be through utter death and destruction.

"Which ones among you will follow me?"

The answer came as powder answers the spark from the flint. The square glittered with waving swords, and the town rang with the shouting. Pedro Barba saw and heard, and afterwards he wrote to the governor about it, and considered the matter closed, since it was plain that after that no one could think of arresting Cortez. Estévan and Bernal and Alvarado, old campaigners, all of them, found themselves shouting their allegiance when their commander ceased speaking. It may have been because of the things he had said, or more likely because they recognized the force of his leadership, and rejoiced in it. But not only the soldiers caught the ardor; back of Cortez, where he stood elevated above the tossing crowd, they had a glimpse of Father Olmedo holding his crucifix aloft, his face radiant with a fanatic light. Against the black and white of his Dominican garb, the grey steel of Cortez's morion, inwrought with gilt threads, stood out, and the rich pattern of his embroidered cloak made a gleam of deep colors in the sun. But under the rim of the morion his eyes roved eagerly, and for all the rage of his eloquence, he was never too lost in his cause to be choosing and estimating the men before him.

"And this," thought Estévan, "is the Cortez we have laughed with so many days — the Cortez who married to get out of trouble — the cynic knave who quarreled with old Ponce de Leon for the mere excess of his own youth. I, too, am growing credulous."

He, too, was growing silent; for in all these words, there was no word for him.

They appointed a rendezvous in the bay at Cape San Antonio, and the sailing began that day. In a week, Cortez

Jungle in Tropical America

joined his men there with more supplies, and they spent a little time in drilling the troops, in re stowing the provisions and powder, and in general preparations; each day, while they waited, more men came in, and the party continued to grow — up to the moment of final sailing.

To give the governor every chance to cover his discomfiture gracefully, as well as to leave the legal appearance of his own movements in the best possible light, Cortez sent back a letter, filled with assurances of his loyalty to the work set forth in his commission, and reporting his movements up to that time with punctilious accuracy. For Cortez, with a masterly sense of effect, was always ready to make any effort that might add to the proper ensemble; whatever might be in his heart, he would see to it that he and his enterprise looked right, and that its commander, in the eyes of all men, should seem a captain above reproach.

So this was Hernando Cortez, when, in the thirty-fourth year of his age, he gathered his legions about him, and set forth to storm the mysterious kingdom of Montezuma. A man in rich garments, with fine armors; tall, and slender in the hips and legs, but wide in the shoulders, long-armed, with white hands that never twitched, and seldom moved but with purpose. He was pale, and his dark eyes had a quick, intense gaze, from beneath his brows, so that one seldom noticed the sharpness of his features, or the height of his forehead, where, after a while, the constant wearing of a helmet made the dark hair grow sparsely. The blackness of his beard, and the smoldering color in his thin, closely compressed lips, accentuated the pallor of his face. His manner was prompt, direct, magnetic, commanding, soldierly in everything. Heedful as he was of his appearance, he cared nothing for his personal comfort. Heat and cold, hunger or feasting, desert drought or tropic rain he

suffered with equal indifference. Whatever he may have been before the governor's commission reached him, this was the man he became from that hour — and this is the man who counted and drilled and embarked the ill-assorted crowd that met at the little white-rimmed bay in the lee of Cape San Antonio, February 18, 1519.

The force consisted, at this time, of eleven ships, the largest being of a hundred tons burden, two others of seventy, and the others small open barks. Manning these vessels were 110 seamen. The fighting troop, counting every man who could by chance or charity be enlisted as a soldier, numbered 553. There were also 200 Indians, slaves, who might be useful in lading and in building operations. There were fourteen small cannon, and an abundant stock of ammunition, for Cortez, wherever he had been offered the choice, had taken powder instead of provisions.

"The voyage," he declared, "is short, and the people of the mainland must eat. Therefore we shall soon find food enough. But powder — that is a stuff one must not without. It will get us all the other things, if we take but enough of it."

There were thirty-two cross-bowmen in the company, all skilled fellows provided with good and complete armor. As many musketeers, as well, gave Cortez great satisfaction, though he wished fervently that he might double their number. The rest of the men were weaponed only with pikes and swords, and armored according to their individual luck and property — which is to say, some had leather helmets and wadded shirts, and some were well fitted with morions and breastplates, while a few went gay in ancient jerkins and ragged hose, and planned to take helmets from the enemy, twisting turbans of colored rags about their heads in the meantime.

But the flower of the company — and a dismally hard

troop it was to embark with, in the circumstances — was the cavalry, numbering sixteen horse, and not all these of good speed and appearance.

"If there were time for a fiesta, now," Cortez explained, gaily, to Estévan and Bernal, "we might arrange a bull-fight for the sport of the men. But when I look upon my

The House of the Queen of Cortez in the City of Mexico

precious horses, I feel a sinking in my heart. For a stout bull, properly goaded, in the ring at Madrid, would never look twice at them. However, they shall serve us well, since I am convinced that this Montezuma, being no Christian, nor ever having dealt with Christians, will be no judge of a good horse."

"Speak of them as you will," said Bernal, "and I admit they would not do credit to a regiment of his Majesty's cavalry, but without them I would not give half a crown for our chances of ever seeing Montezuma at all."

The morning passed, and the prayers for the fortune of the fleet ascended with the incense. Mass was celebrated,

and the ships went forth, borne on light and fickle winds, under the guidance and protection, so earnestly besought, of Saint Peter. Being once clear of the land, Cortez rejoiced ardently, and was grateful to Heaven for the continuance of favor, holding that in passing beyond the reach of jealousy and cowardice, he had been delivered from the greatest danger that threatened. He now looked only forward.

Estévan, facing the vast west once more, looked forward, too, but with no such surety of gaze. The long and fruitless months had left their mark on him, and he grew to fear the rising of each succeeding sun, whose light shone never on the faces he longed to see, his love, and his enemy. . . . Meanwhile the leagues stretched longer astern, and the land they sought drew near.

In the lookout's post on the foremost ship Cortez gazed toward the goal. In the eagerness of his gaze there was less of the rapt devotion of the Crusader than of the daring inward light which had piloted — long before the faith he held had risen — the adventurous prows that clove the deep from Hellas, when the search for the Golden Fleece began.

The Birthplace of Cortez (*From an old engraving*)

CHAPTER XV

BREAKING A NATION'S HEART

AFTER a week of uncertain weather, of storm and drifting, the little fleet came together again and landed on the island of Cozumel, where they remained a fortnight; during this brief interval Cortez took complete possession of the island, overthrew the images, purged the temples, and set up the Christian faith by main force, the natives accepting it as a matter of course, at least during the visitation. When the invaders crossed the channel from Cozumel, they were richer in confidence and in provisions, and their missionary work had been strongly encouraged by the passive attitude of the islanders toward the downfall of their gods.

More valuable than these things, perhaps, was the finding of a man, a Spaniard, who came to them across the channel in a canoe, naked and alone, paddling like a native, and looking upon the expedition with all the ecstasy of one delivered from long bondage, as indeed he was. This man, Aguilar by name, had been shipwrecked on the Yucatan coast, had escaped the perils of the sacrificed captives, had endured years of menial slavery, and now returned to his own people, by this happy chance meeting, bringing with him a complete knowledge of the Yucatan tongue. Such an interpreter was of the utmost value to Cortez for his operations in Yucatan, and he may have encouraged Aguilar too much, on account of his abilities; for later, when they came among peoples who spoke the Aztec language, the favor of the castaway declined rapidly.

Aguilar's story in itself was strange enough, and he told it well. When the men heard that he had been a priest, and

had, through all the temptations of life among the barbarians, remained faithful to his vows, all were moved by the heroism of it. But when he described the lures of Satan which had been set for him, implying in his words the sermon upon continence and virtue which he had for eight long years been prevented from delivering, laughter arose in the camp, and after that day Aguilar's story could never be referred to but with mirth, and every one called him Father Anthony, after the saint.

From Cozumel they coasted along to the river where Chief Tobasco's town lay, and there they drew up, hoping to be invited to land. In this they were disappointed. Instead of a friendly meeting, the people of Tobasco's tribe welcomed them with a clamor of conchs and drums, and arrows of open defiance. This aroused Cortez to anger.

"Here," he protested, "we see the folly of the savage. We come among them peacefully, to trade with them, and perhaps save their souls from everlasting fires, and they meet us with war-cries."

"It may be they have cause," Aguilar suggested meekly.

Cortez flared up at that. "Cause! They do not know us. You are the only Spaniard they ever saw, and I cannot see how you could have given them cause to resist us — unless it be by the scorning of their women."

"You forget," said Estévan. "Grijalva's men landed here."

"True, my Hernando. But you were of that party, and you know that they were simple and gracious enough then."

"They were not so simple when we left as when we landed."

Cortez did not pursue the discussion. The sand-bar in the mouth of the river prevented going up with the ships, so the whole fleet was anchored in the bay, while with a

considerable force in the boats Cortez and Estévan ascended the river, leaving Ordaz in charge of the fleet. The banks were densely wooded and steep, and the undergrowth waved mysteriously as they went along, here and there showing a moving bronze back, or the gleam of blue-black hair, splashed with sunlight, among the leaves. The toil at the oars was hard, and at the first open slope they drew up and prepared to land.

Instantly they were made aware of their welcome by a flight of arrows, and even a few javelins, which caused great consternation among the rowers. It was nearly sunset, and Cortez dropped down the stream a little way, where they encamped on an island, and waited for the break of day before making the attack; since it was plain that there could be no landing without a fight.

To the Spaniards, the skirmish at the meadow on the bank was an ordinary affair, in which their firearms and discipline were pitted against the forces of the forest, and the result was never for a moment in doubt. They were for a time hindered in getting clear of the boats by the javelin-throwers in the canoes, who came upon them swiftly, discharged their weapons, and retreated down the current, to make way for others. The resistance, once Cortez reached firm ground and led a charge into the mass of the foe, ended in utter rout. The party left the landing-place, where the dead were strewn thickly in the tall grass, and went on to Tobasco's town that day; and

Mexican Adobe Houses

when night came, they slept, heavily guarded, in the homes of the fugitives.

Toward midnight, a far-off clamor of voices and horns reached the sentinels, and the fires to the westward seemed to indicate the gathering of a considerable body of warriors in camp. The watchers aroused Cortez, and after a hasty consultation, he called Estévan, and ordered him to take what boats he could, with twenty men, and return to the fleet for reinforcements.

The night's work was a weary one, for no one had had rest since the fighting in the morning. But the current was fairly strong for a mile or so below the town, and when that had been passed, the chill of the approaching dawn awoke the sleepy rowers, and made them exert themselves for the mere comfort of keeping warm. By sunrise they came out into the bay, and finished the trip in a hearty race to the flag-ship.

"If Cortez needs the cavalry," Ordaz averred, "the horses will need to be taken back by land. We can draw in as close as possible, and let them swim ashore."

"We could never get them through the forest to the town," Estévan protested.

"Then it were better to leave them where they are."

"I was ordered to fetch the horses. By your leave, I will arrange a way to carry out my instructions."

"As for that," Ordaz replied, "you may do what you like. But I have watched this shore, and I do not believe there are people enough on it to make the advantage worth the trouble."

"We have a dozen wounded men in the town already, and the landing was only a skirmish. I will take the cavalry."

There was no rest for Estévan that day either. He saw to the unloading of one of the barks, the fitting out of her

Mexicans Going to Market

hull with sweeps, and the building of stout stabling upon her. Her draught was light, and she carried all the horses and the cannon easily, with men enough to work the sweeps as well. When night came, he was ready. The boats were sent in file toward the shore, lines passed, sails spread to take what advantage they might of the shoreward breeze, and they started up the river again. It was a night of incredible toil, but they had men enough to afford frequent shifts at the oars and sweeps; and however hard it might be to accomplish, the value of the horses would certainly be doubled if they could be landed in secret, without ever being seen by the natives. Once or twice, when the bark grounded on the bar and they had to wait an hour for the tide to rise high enough to float her over, and again when they reached the lower reach of the swift water, it seemed as though the plan must fail. But the indomitable perseverance of Estévan, and the tireless energy of the men themselves — for the reinforcements had been carefully picked, leaving to the fleet a garrison watch of only such as were unfit for hard service — finally triumphed over the difficulties of the task. When the dawn began to brighten in the sky, the bark was moored in the river by the canoe-landing, and the horses were screened with sail-canvas from prying eyes along the opposite bank.

Estévan reported his return and the success of his movement to Cortez while the commander was breaking his fast in Cacique Tobasco's house. But he never finished his report, for he fell asleep while they were talking about it; Cortez and Alvarado carried him into a cool and airy apartment, and left him on the couch where the chieftain himself had been wont to sleep.

Not until late in the afternoon did Estévan awake, and then it was with a vague feeling of unrest, as though he were in some dim fashion conscious of having failed in his

duty. He stretched his limbs, and found that he was stiff with the toil he had undergone, even to the point of actual pain. Then he heard, afar off, the rumbling of cannon fire, and knew that the battle had begun, and that he was left in the town until the work should be finished. For a

A Mexican Water Carrier

moment he listened, making sure by the irregular, peculiar rhythm of the explosions, that it was really a battle and not a distant thunder storm among the hills. He dragged himself out, and found that he had been left in charge with Montejo as his lieutenant, and that Montejo had strict orders not to awake his commandant except in a case of immediate peril to their possession of the town. No peril was visible. No further work seemed necessary. Cortez had simply

led out his force and hurled it upon the native army where it was drawn up to receive him. The counsel for the movement had been from Alvarado, to whom prudence in any form was distasteful, and from Cortez's own impetuous heart.

Montejo and Estévan waited, strolling up and down the long-deserted house-tops, and speculating on the fight, though never for a moment doubting its result. The first news came from a youth with a deep slash along his temple and cheek, who had been incapacitated for further fighting by the blood-flow across his eyes, and who had run back to the town, not so much from actual fright as because he was too dazed by the battle and his own wound to know clearly what he was doing.

This youth told them of the number of the enemy, and that they covered a slope greater in extent than the whole town with its adjoining orchards; Bernal, he said, had estimated them at 40,000, and in the first flight of their arrows, half the men of Cortez's troop had been struck, though for the most part lightly.

"If this be the case," Montejo observed, "and half our fellows are scratched and smarting, I am sorry for the heathen. In such a force, the Indians will be hemmed in by their own numbers, and the field will be a shambles."

The youth with the wounded face put his hands over his eyes, as though to shut out a sight he shrank from.

"If it be as he says," said Estévan, "my heart will rest easier when our friends come back. I would I were there among them. Think of the odds; and these Indians are no cowards. Lad," and he turned sharply to the boy as as he spoke, "did you see any man of our friends killed in this volley? Bethink thee — any man down who would never rise?"

"In truth, I believe there were some," the lad answered,

"but it were hard to say. Bernal took out some screens of sail-cloth, and those who were deep hit they took quickly into these tents, so that no one might see them die."

Estévan struck his hand on the ledge before him exultantly. "There," he exclaimed, "is a man of sound judgment. What with the boldness of Cortez, and the terror of the horses, and the mother-wit of this Bernal, nothing can stand against us."

"It seemed to me a foolish thing," the lad remarked ruefully.

"It was the wisdom of the serpent," said Montejo. "Let the heathen believe we cannot be slain, and they must yield everything to us."

Toward sunset the horsemen came back, the troop riding slowly in, the animals sorely breathed and with a grisly muck stiffening on their legs. The riders took them down to the river, and while they were rubbing them down and washing them clean of the foulness of the battle, the watchers of the town learned how the day had sped. It was as they had thought — the cavalry had won the fight. The Spaniards had marched out about three miles through the fields, where the opening green of spring gave promise of the new year's harvest; they had met the enemy, and had marveled at the amazing numbers of the army which confronted them. They had been greeted with a clamor of conchs and drums, and a thunder of voices that seemed to shake the very hills; and when the first great volley of arrows was loosed against them, it was like a gleaming, barbed hail, too thick for shield or helmet to meet and ward. So that in truth there had been nearly seventy men struck, though few were seriously hurt. They had opened with musketry and cross-bow practice, and had put the cannons in action as soon as they could. Then they had rushed the hill, striking in at a single point in a solid phalanx, and

cutting their way nearly to the center before the charge gave out its force.

From this new position they turned the guns outward, and fought back the surrounding hosts with pikes and swords. But Cortez, getting clear of his own men under cover of the cannon smoke, had ridden around the great

NEAR THE VIGA, MEXICO

mêlée, and had dashed down upon the host from the rear, his sixteen horsemen wielding their swords right merrily, and cutting a dreadful path to the center again.

Then the unspeakable advantage of the cavalry came into play. For whatsoever of courage the Indians possessed, being sorely tried in conflict with beings who were clad in steel, and who wielded the thunder for the destruction of their foes, gave way at the sight of these awful monsters, striking with blades like men, but spurning the earth and the slain bodies that bestrewed it with the terrible hoofs

of beasts. At the sight, the fears of the Mictlan gods were loosed among the warriors, and the panic of a supernatural dread fell upon them, so that they hurled their weapons from them and fled, pell-mell, shrieking, their eyes blinded and their ears beaten by the black wings of terror.

From the grain fields where, that morning, the hosts of Yucatan had gathered to the clamor and triumphant

Wayside Shrines in Mexico To-Day

shouting, to the pageantry and pomp of an army in war-gear for defense, Cortez came back with his little band, and their arms hung heavy with the dreadful weariness of the slaughter they had done. In the town, the mass was celebrated. Having dressed their wounds, and eaten their evening meal, the conquerors lay down to sleep. In that short day they had broken the heart and courage of a nation.

The next day Cortez sent out an embassy of soldiers, captives, and slaves to treat with the chieftains. He offered them, he said, a choice. They might continue the war, and he would cut them down to the last soul. They might yield, and he would ask of them little: only that they should forget their old gods, and accept the religion he brought

them; that they should bring him such supplies in grain and fresh fruits as would load his boats, and such gold as might lie in their possession; that they should pledge their allegiance forever to his imperial master, the King of Spain; and for these considerations he would accord them, freely and magnanimously, his full and sovereign pardon.

The crushed and hopeless people yielded to every demand. They sent him great delegations laden with gifts — spoils or sacrifices, since they looked upon him more as a god and leader of gods than as an earthly conqueror. The idols were wrenched from the temples, and the Christian faith was, with great ceremony, officially declared to exist and to be accepted throughout the provinces of Yucatan. In honor of the occasion, they named Tobasco's town anew — Saint Mary of Victory. The procession wound around the great pyramid, and the Indians flocked in by thousands, while Father Olmedo, having his words translated by Aguilar, instructed the populace in the tenets of their new creed. Then Olmedo, inspired to an eloquence too supreme to brook the hindrance of translation, preached them a glowing sermon, and the hearts of the conquerors were one and all uplifted at the sight of the horde of converts, all with one stroke brought under the blessing of salvation.

Among the gifts were many which never found their way into the boats, but were left to the disposal of the givers; and some which accorded curiously with the preaching of the visitors — for example, twenty maidens, picked for their beauty and intelligence, and delivered with the understanding that they were for wives — not slaves.

These maidens Cortez accepted, only making reservation in this: that they must be baptized before they could be distributed. When he came to look them over, and to parcel them out among the captains, he was in something of a quandary, so many men having earned special consider-

ation, and so few of the twenty being suited, in various respects, to the Spanish ideal of womanly beauty. One in particular, being so far superior to the rest, he hesitated over. Finally he had her baptized, and Father Olmedo gave her the name of Marina. The hesitation settled the matter, for the next time he saw her, she knew that her name was Marina, that her heart belonged to the great captain of the white men, and she could say in Spanish, with wonderful sweetness and quaintness, "My lord."

To give her away must obviously be a most ungentle and churlish act. So Cortez kept her. They floated down the river, leaving the new and unmeasured provinces loyal to their new king and their new church, and the fleet set sail for the port of San Juan de Ulúa. The acquisition to the King was of little consequence; the blow that had fallen upon Yucatan, and had blasted it to its foundations, left nothing lasting behind it save the pity of it. But Cortez had acquired in Marina one of the cardinal points of his destiny. Our Jason had found his Medea.

THE UPPER VIGA

CHAPTER XVI

ON THE SOUTHERN SHORE

THE ships came to anchor off the island of San Juan de Ulúa. Only a pause, this, however, for Cortez was in no mood for delaying longer than he must. With three of the swiftest vessels he set off at once to reconnoiter the coast to northward, his hope being to find, if possible, a navigable stream which might lead to the land of Montezuma.

Hardly were the sails trimmed, however, before there came a hail from the lookout, of a ship in the offing. Cortez hoisted Spanish colors, and was at once answered by the stranger vessel. As she drew nearer, they could see that she was of sturdy make, not built so much for speed as for security.

"A trader," said Cortez briefly, eying the approaching craft.

In a little time there came aboard Cortez's flag-ship a Spaniard who introduced himself as Señor Alvarez de Pineda. He was a shrewd, weather-beaten mariner, who was not to be largely impressed by any living thing, and who was able firmly to resist all Cortez's efforts to persuade him to their quest. He had himself come from a long trip to northward, and possessed a chart of the coast-line which he presented to Cortez. This chart Cortez was inclined to treat somewhat cavalierly; not so Estévan, who noted with a thrill of interest that the shore-line on Pineda's map curved away in precisely the same manner as had that shown on the burned parchment of Balboa. They were ashes now, map and map-maker, but their wisdom held.

Estévan fell into talk with Pineda, who was bound farther down the coast. He told Hernando, among other items, of his long endeavors, of his finding of a great river, on the shore across this gulf; a marvelous river which flowed into the sea by a delta like that of the Nile, carrying with it a flood of soil and silt, — such a river, in short, as must be fed by vast plains, and wide reaches. Pineda confessed that he was minded to return and sail farther

On the Way to Mexico-Tenochtitlan

up that river, whose mouth he had barely explored; for it seemed to him that there must be great cities and much wealth in so great a country as must lie in that river-valley. Not immediately, though, for he must bring back to the markets of the Indies the spoils already in his hold.

It was by this time dark. The ships returned to a safe anchorage under the lee of the island, and waited for night. The darkness came on slowly, though, and the twilight was still suffused with enough light for seeing. It was seen that another ship was in sight, this time from the east, and as the gloom enveloped the world, this stranger, too, crept in and anchored in the island's bay. She also was a Span-

iard, and boats put off from her at once. Men scrambled over the side of Estévan's ship, after much hailing and palaver. Estévan, walking with Alvarado on the forward deck, listened curiously.

"She comes from the south, from the gold coast," said the latter. "Her captain is Dureza; they have been starved out on some fool's expedition for gold. Cortez will bring them to his hand; mark it!"

"Whose expedition was it?" asked Estévan, his heart beginning to beat harder. Any news from the southward was news for him. But Alvarado did not know.

"I will speak with one of the men," said Estévan suddenly; and walked aft in the darkness. As he neared the waist, he caught a word that drove the blood still more wildly to his heart.

It was "Orelva"!

In another moment he had learned all he wished to know. But he called a sailor and questioned him, for further surety. Orelva was on this coast, somewhere, his ships disabled, his men ready to mutiny. He was a dog and the son of a dog, the sailor swore; and might thank the saints he was alive. For if all men had their dues, he had been dead long since. Did the señor know Señor Orelva? Estévan answered him a short Yes; the question he yearned to put would not rise to his lips. . . . It did not matter.

He went to his bunk to think. There was but one course open to him. He must reach Orelva before there would be time for his ships to be repaired. As he thought over the matter, his head throbbed painfully; but after a little his mind cleared; it was very simple. He knew that he would go, that he would find Orelva, that their score would be settled on that day forever. And so thinking, he fell asleep.

At dawn he sought Cortez. He did not mince words.

"I must leave you," he said. "I have an affair which I must attend, on the shore to southward. I claim my release from my word, since this, too, was in the bargain."

"It is so," said Cortez. A shadow crossed his face. "I had rather it had been anybody else, of all my company," he said. "But — go!"

"I will, if I can, return," said Estévan. "It may be — " He did not finish. The two men stood in silence for a moment, thinking swiftly.

"How will you go?" asked Cortez, after a little.

"Pineda sails to-day," said Estévan. "I sail with him."

Three hours later, Estévan, casting his glance astern of Pineda's ship, saw the island of Ulúa lose itself in the sunny haze. Pineda had at once consented to take Estévan with him, and Hernando felt that the Fates were being kind at last. For Pineda's was a coasting voyage, the vessel never leaving sight of the shore, and pausing to anchor, for greater safety, every night. There was no fear of passing Orelva's settlement, even had he not the disabled ships to mark the spot. Pineda's ship, however, proved a desperately slow sailor, so slow, indeed, that before the end of the first day Estévan felt that he would have given his head and heart for the swift flag-ship of Cortez. His eyes strained across the leagues ahead, untired and untiring. So steadfast, yet so vigilant, was his scanning of the shore that the sailors, watching him, became convinced that he was on the lookout for some great treasure.

At last, when the tropic night settled down over sea and land, the ship lay still, moving gently to the swaying urge of the water. Estévan, who could not sleep, kept to the deck, and, though he knew it to be futile, watched the coast for some sign of a light. As the long hours wore by, he felt himself becoming drowsy; at last, an hour or two before

A Quiet Stream in Central America

dawn, he fell asleep against a coil of rope. There the dawn found him.

All through the second day the ship skirted slowly along the shore. At times she was so near that the men could see the leaves on the trees standing out against the sky. The coast was variable, sometimes steeply precipitous, again shelving gradually into a gravelly beach. But always were there trees, of fresh, bright foliage, and in nearly all cases the sloping cliff was thick with tangled vines, through which the brown earth hardly showed. It was like the movement of a slow pageant; it seemed as though the ship stood still, and the shore moved slowly astern. Señor Pineda was a cautious navigator, and believed in taking no chances with shoals or sunken rocks. He, too, had his goal along this shore, about which he said nothing, and Estévan never discovered what it was. He, chafing more than ever at this leisurely progress, never left the deck. As the twilight fell on the second day, and the straining ropes were still, he stood by himself alone in the prow, with the cool breath of the wind just touching his forehead. The world was as quiet as the grave. All the ceaseless, breathing traffic of the sails was stilled; the sea was level as a floor. Not a sound crept to the ear, save the vague rumor of speech in the hold. The night toiled on, its lingering hours made of interminable minutes whose seconds were little hours.

Time . . . and the slow beat of time. It was to be over at last.

As the third day drew to a close, so drew the search of Estévan. As he stood in the prow he saw the ships of Orelva lying beached upon the shelving sand, their spars pointing crazily to heaven. With his lips drawn to a white, straight line, he went to Pineda, thanked him courteously for his aid, and bade him put his passenger ashore where

yonder ships lay beached. In a few moments his little dinghy left the side. He landed, dismissed the sailors, thanked them, too, gravely, turned on his heel, and walked up the sloping sand.

At a fire in front of a small makeshift hut men were eating sullenly. They paid him small heed. One man more or less, what mattered it? Estévan came forward, halting before the silent group. He asked for Señor Orelva.

The men shrugged their shoulders. A swift dread shot through the questioner; it had not till that moment occurred to him that Orelva might have deserted his expedition. He was reassured. From the hut before him came the snarling voice of a man, strong, and mocking, and venomous:

"Who asks in this wilderness for Señor Orelva?"

Estévan walked to the door. In the half-light within a man arose and faced him. It was the man he sought. They eyed each other, unspeaking.

Estévan broke the silence, his voice held so low that the other's ears must strain to hear it. As he heard, Orelva rose, coming swiftly forward. The two left the hut together. The men by the fire regarded them with a flicker of interest, but did not turn their heads to follow their passage. Orelva in the lead, they walked on, quickly, till they came to a quiet, level, open space where were no weeds nor vines. Orelva stopped.

"Shall it be here, Señor Husband?" he asked in his grating voice.

Estévan's sword made answer. The two saluted gravely. They made no pretence with regard to their quarrel; both understood that their meeting could have but one — or one of two — ends. They engaged without a word.

Estévan felt as though his arm were living light. His close-shut lips never changed their level line; his eyes never faltered in their fixed regard of the eyes that glared into

them. The movements of their feet upon the earth made a little hissing undertone.

Orelva, finding that he could not get behind this guard of steel, began to mutter taunts, thinking to rouse the other's anger, make him uncautious. In vain: Estévan's face grew a shade whiter, but his manner of sword-play never faltered. Such a fight as this could not last long; Orelva's patience snapped suddenly, and he started a violent attack,

At Cholula

his blows darting in like summer lightning. Estévan never stirred a foot. His changeless mask of a face irritated his foe, whose own face was by this time aflame with fury.

He ran around Estévan in a circle, attacking viciously. A feint for the throat was met by a straight counter to the heart. Señor Orelva suddenly stood still, his face turning grey. His sword wavered to the ground. His knees bent slowly beneath him, and he sank to the earth, falling atop of his sword.

Estévan, opening his lips for the first time, gave a little, noiseless sigh. That much, at least, was done.

The man on the ground lay as though in a doze. Estévan bent over him, then felt, though he knew it to be vain,

for a flask of liquor. He had none himself, he knew; Orelva was better equipped. He held the liquor to the dying man's lips. Orelva drank, thirstily, with gasps between the swallowing.

Estévan, stooping very low, spoke compellingly in his enemy's ear.

"Where is Señora Estévan?" he said.

A malignant smile crossed Orelva's face. He made no answer. Estévan, his voice hoarse with eagerness and anxiety, repeated his question.

"I do — not know — where any ladies are," said Orelva, thickly.

Estévan shook him by the shoulder. He could see, as he did so, that the man had not long to live; only minutes were left to him now, to learn what he had to know. He bent closer to the other's ear, and spoke again, almost beseechingly. A one-sided smile crossed Orelva's lips at the tone.

"I do — not know," he repeated obstinately. Thereupon ensued a scene that was not pretty, between the man who was all but dead, and the man whom he had sought to wrong. Estévan saw the devil's delight Orelva had in foiling him thus, even at the very brink of the grave; he racked his desperate brains for some word that might move this mocking thing to humanity, if only for one moment, before clay should relapse into clay.

Orelva fell still; his wound had ceased to bleed. He was growing sleepy, and he rested his head upon Estévan's arm. He gave no heed to questions, gave no sign of having heard them. Estévan, his triumph bitter in his mouth, gazed impotently upon the grey face beneath him.

Before the end Orelva opened his eyes once. Estévan, holding his breath, bent forward to catch the words.

"She is dead. . . ." said the grey lips, very low. "She would not — do what I would — have her do — I killed

her. . . ." Estévan thought he would not speak again. He was wrong: in a moment another whisper came:

"I lost her — you lose her — too, Señor — Husband."

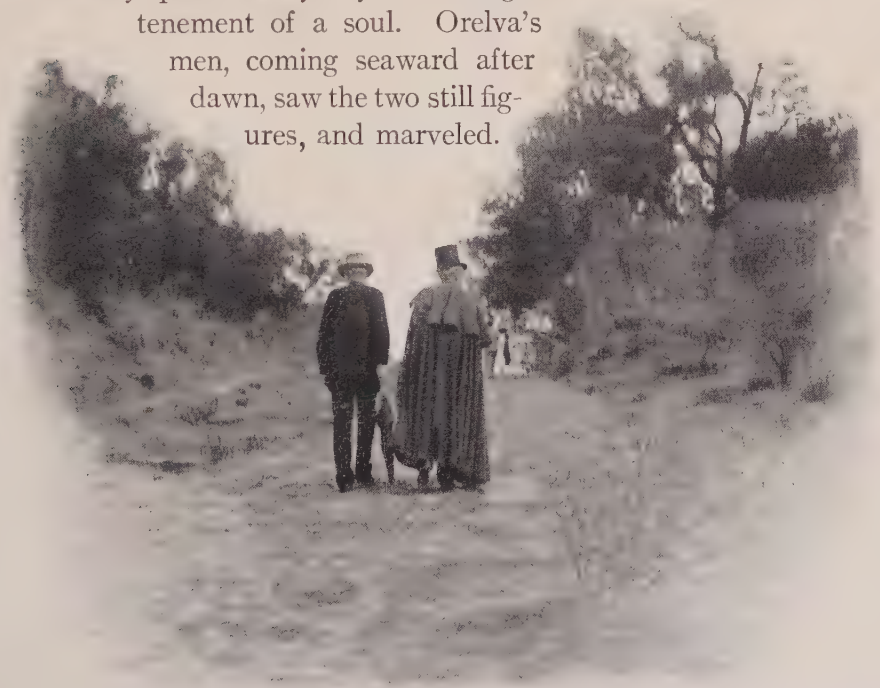
Estévan laid the lifeless body upon the earth.

This, then, was the end, the end of his search, and the end of life; for the sweetest part of life, this man had said, was dead. Christina dead! He raged helplessly against the belief; yet could not doubt the word of a dying man. Even the sardonic smile on the dead lips before him did not show him the truth.

Sick at heart, he went a little way down the shore, and stood looking out over the darkening waters. They were like a black garment with a tiny white frill where the faint rollers broke along the sand. But not the healing sense of night could soothe him now. His arms flung upward in despair. Yes; this was the end. For what trails remained that were of use to follow?

Christina was dead.

Morning found him still there, brooding upon the shore. Twenty paces away lay the thing which had been the tenement of a soul. Orelva's men, coming seaward after dawn, saw the two still figures, and marveled.



A Mexican Priest Ascending the Aztec Pyramid of Cholula

CHAPTER XVII

THE INVADING ARMY

TO Cortez, encamped on the shore of a strange and a wonderful land, came straightway a magnificent embassy from the monarch of that land.

"We come as envoys from the divine Montezuma," rang their grandiloquent address, translated through Marina's lips, "and we bring greetings to the chief of the strangers who have landed on our shores!"

"I am come," answered Cortez, "as a messenger from the greatest Monarch beyond the seas, bringing friendly word to the great Montezuma. Here in this spot for some days I and my people rest; then shall I take up the march, and let nothing stay me till I bear this greeting to your Emperor!"

"We will bear that word," suggested the ambassadors.

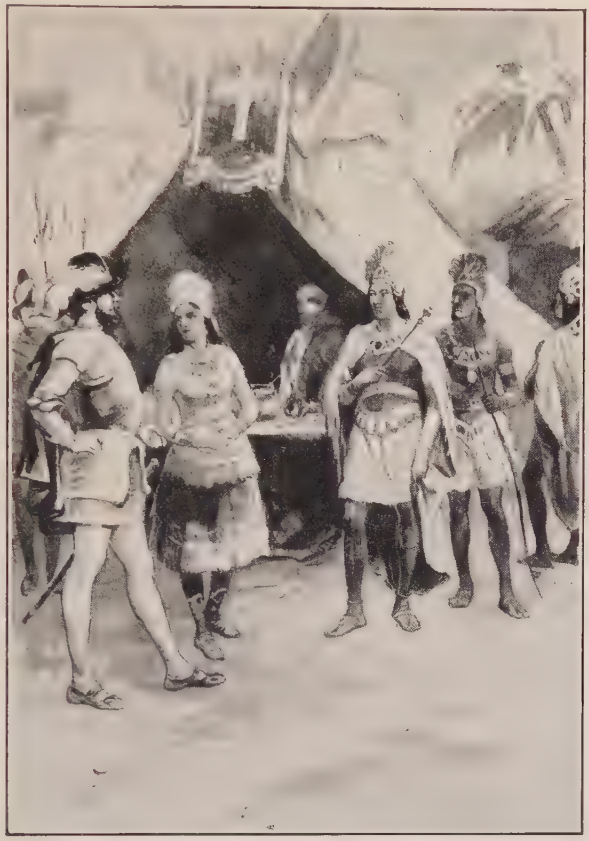
"It must come from lips of Spain, through me," said Cortez.

"Then must we consult the divine Montezuma; in a little time, it may be, you shall learn his imperial will."

So Cortez, forced to be content, bit his lip and waited. There had been progress, though, even in the little time he had been ashore. There was a fortified camp built; there were friendly relations established with near-by native tribes; better than all these, there was an interpreter who was to be worth to the invaders many times her weight of the rarest metal. This was Marina, now utterly Cortez's own.

Under the guidance of her master, Marina had mastered a strange and beautiful language, which she conceived to

be Spanish, and which Cortez, having taught it her, could understand perfectly. A sort of cryptic lovers' language it was, and they found each other's meanings as a mother learns the inarticulate speech of her child before it becomes intelligible to another ear. Marina did, in truth, learn Spanish in an incredibly short time, but through the learning, this language of smiles and gestures, and broken syllables, served its turn. The value of her, this ally from the heart of the beleaguered land, was from the first incalculable. Medea was to serve her Jason well.



CORTEZ AND THE ENVOYS OF MONTEZUMA
(*From a drawing by F. A. Carter*)

While the messages from Montezuma were going back and forth, Cortez was strengthening his position, looking about him, sensing the ground. When at the end of eight days the envoys returned, bearing gifts, but no invitation, Cortez returned a courteous reply, but one with a sting in

its tail. The gold and silver gifts he accepted; and showed them to the men, to serve as lures. Great jewels there were, too, robes, and cloaks of brilliant feathers; works in carven stone and fused glass; and lastly, one of Cortez's own gifts a shining Spanish helmet, empty when given, but now, returned in a pouch of inlaid leather, and filled to the brim with grains of water gold.

The inciting influence of these gifts, however, was much abated when it was discovered on the morrow that the Indian village by the camp, as well as other villages near, was utterly deserted. Not a native was to be seen, and as the day wore on without a sign of anybody not a Spaniard, a gloom fell on the spirits of the invaders. The natives were preparing for war, that was clear; and it was not alone the fainter-hearted of the white men who looked on the prospect with alarm. They seemed to be but a handful, as indeed they were, to cope with a whole nation. By night of the second day the camp was in revolt.

Under the leadership of one Ordaz, the insurgent party demanded an immediate return to Cuba; when they had a larger force, it might be well to reattempt this hazardous undertaking; not otherwise. Cortez, pondering, seemed to yield; outwardly, he agreed to Ordaz's demands, and passed orders that the ships be ready to sail in the morning. But secretly he summoned his captains, Alvarado, Bernal, Montejo, and another, and bade them go among the men, and do what might be done by men of courage and spirit, to turn the scale. His plan succeeded; in the one night the captains, moving in and among the groups of men, threw their influence so mightily into the scale of valor and determination that ere morning the fight was won. The orders to sail were revoked, and Cortez, stronger than ever, addressing his men before his tent, gave his word to lead them against these heathen as long as they were alive to follow.

Thus ended, at one and the same time, the first attempt at insurrection and the influence of Señor Ordaz. Before the flurry was over, however, came greater and more urgent matters. Five Indians presented themselves before the camp, asking for the chief. Cortez, cool and wary, bade them state their business. Significant business it was.

It was nothing less than the first overture from the tribe of the Totonacs. These envoys were come from the great

The Harbor and Castle of Vera Cruz To-Day

city of Cempoala, some miles to the northward, — were come in secret embassy, to seek the aid of the Spaniards in their rebellion against the throne and power of Montezuma. . . . To Cortez the moment was fraught with the highest exaltation. As he sat, thinking, his eyes blank of expression, the whole great game was playing itself out in his imagination. His course was not new, — it was a tried and an approved method, devised by the man whom Pedrarias had slain at Acla,— yet a method as old as war and conquests. Seeing these things, in a flash of vision, Cortez saw other things too, the ways and means and manner

of attack in the game of craft that was to be his henceforward.

He entered upon it, cool, unhasting, unrelenting, suave. He met the envoys with courtesy and decision. . . . And three days later the news started for the capital of Montezuma that the white strangers had begun to build their city — a city this time, — under the very walls of the disaffected town of Cempoala. This city Cortez named Villa Rica de la Vera Cruz; and of it he said that if it were not at first a great city he would soon make it so; and that no one could doubt that it was created, as its name implied, in the service of the True Cross.

There was another reason, too, for the name, a reason which was not perhaps a cause, but which yet was too potent for a mere coincidence. It had befallen at Cempoala when Cortez and his aides were exploring a temple in the first days of their coming. Suddenly, without warning, they had come upon a carven image, prostrate, in the temple roof of stone, — an image which was in the shape of a cross. It was the symbol of Quetzalcoatl, or commonly, Quetzal', the Fair God of the Aztecs!

It was the first time the Spaniard had heard his name. Eagerly he sought for knowledge of this god; and at the last, through Marina and the high-priest of the temple, the tale was pieced out for his ears.

"In Cholula is his great temple," ran the story. "In Mexico-Tenochtitlan they worship him, too, the more since the omens of his return have made men fear him. Of his creation, who shall say? Men tell of his coming, back in the new spring of the empire; how he taught men to till the soil, and to make bronze, and to reverence the priests and the chiefs, that the land might grow in power. He was pale-faced, and his hair and his beard were yellow, like Tonatiuh!" Marina ended her narration by pointing to Alvarado,

who was a blond man, and who had been called invariably by the natives by the one name, Tonatiuh.

Of the priest, then, Cortez demanded more; and more he heard. He learned of the anger of Tezcatlipoca, the eldest of the gods, who had been starved of his victims by the cult of Quetzal'; of the anger of Huitzil', the war god, and how at last they two had driven Quetzal' out of Mexico; and the marvels of the golden age had vanished, one by one. How he had stayed for a time in Cholula, where his greatest temple had been built, and how finally he had departed overseas in his enchanted boat of serpent-skins, leaving the prophecy that he would one day return.

Of the omens, too, the priest told, which should accompany this return. The rising of the great flood over the causeways of Montezuma's city; the firing of the temples without cause; the flames in the sky, the mysterious voices in the air, and the magical singing in the temple at Cholula. When all was told, even Cortez fell silent, feeling the breath and touch of things unknown yet not undreamed of, things not of the body but of the soul. But he determined to go to Cholula and see the temple of Quetzal'.

Meanwhile, however, more pressing needs arose. As his course mapped itself out more and more along the lines of Balboa in Darien, Cortez thought more and more of the thing that had gripped great Nuñez and laid him low, the treachery from behind. Cortez's method of circumventing the possibility of a similar fate was adroitness itself. It took much thought, though; it was not achieved in a moment; and the moment for it was timed to the instant.

He knew that his commission from Governor Velásquez had been revoked verbally, and he had no doubt that he had already been officially supplanted in his command of the expedition. Very well, he would change the status of affairs, including his own. He had built a town; that town could

have a civil government; and a civil government, composed of twenty or more stout soldiers and men of influence, would not be so easy to hang. This determined on, Cortez wasted no time; sending away on manufactured errands Ordaz and some few other malcontents who might make trouble, Cortez called a meeting of his chief officers. The meeting convened soberly enough, not one man save Cortez dreaming for one moment of the reason for which they were met.

At Cortez's suggestion, it was seen that the city needed a government; and for the magistrates of this government the men voted solemnly. They all regarded it as a mere formality, and Cortez smiled behind his lips. In this manner a government was founded, and a small council was elected, to have charge of the affairs of the city; of this council, in whom the authority was so vested, there was not a man who did not belong body and soul to Cortez.

Having done so much, the rest was easy. At the first public meeting of the council, Cortez craved leave to appear. Leave being instantly granted, he did appear, and began to speak in a manner well compact of courtesy and humility. The council, flattered, felt a stiffening of their several spines. If this Cortez, who defied Cuban governors so cavalierly, felt that they, the council, were worthy of respectfulness such as this, there must be some weight and force of authority vested in them of which they had not guessed. A pleased little thrill ran through the assembly.

"Magistrates of Vera Cruz," began Cortez, "your Excellencies, I come before you to report on certain matters touching the welfare of your city, and the future of the enterprise over which you now hold absolute sway. Since you hold office by reason of the suffrages of these gentlemen, loyal subjects of the King, you represent his Imperial Majesty, and I speak to you with the deference which is due him. Permit me thus to speak:

The Palace and Harbor of Vera Cruz

"We are in the territory of a great King, hostile to Spain, and to the beloved Monarch in whose name you are assembled. Our numbers are few, and our design, if I may be allowed to speak of the plan we held before we attained to the dignity of your authority, is glorious and daring, serving greatly, in the event of its success, both the King and the holy Church. The safety of our lives and our colony, pressed upon by a mighty and threatening nation, depends upon the discipline and prowess of our army, which in the past I have presumed to command.

"Well may I be questioned, and in humility I lay my acts before you, appealing to your mercy. I have hitherto commanded by virtue of my commission from Governor Velásquez, who, being the representative of the King in Cuba, has no authority in this place. Wherefore it is plain that I have no right of command over you. But there can be no safety, no conquest, no glory save by the toil of a commander who shall be acknowledged by all, and submitted to by all. For this task I have now no more warrant than the humblest soldier among us. And if there still clings to me, in the minds of men, any breath of the power I once held, I here resign it into your hands."

A murmur ran through the crowd, some wondering, some angry at what they looked upon as a desertion by their leader, and some beginning to see the end of the game. Cortez drew from his belt the commission he had received from Velásquez, and bowing low, laid it on the table. He turned away as if to leave them. Then, as if moved by another and deeper emotion, he drew his sword, lifted his head, and spoke on, his every word clearly audible, low as it was, to the edge of the crowd.

"As you act in the King's name," he said, "and as it is your duty to choose some one to command your army, it is meet that I, who have commanded, as some think

unlawfully, should first give you my utter allegiance. For my own part, I am ready to take up a pike with these hands which have wielded the sword of a general. Accustomed to command, I have not forgotten how to obey."

With that he kissed the sword, and kneeling, laid it at the feet of the magistrates. He left the meeting, and the

Down the Street of Vera Cruz to the Cathedral

sound of the shouting followed him, echoing over the town and bearing to the farthest sentinels the news that a stroke of state had been accomplished.

The council immediately elected Cortez chief judge and captain-general of the army. His commission was made out in the name of Charles V, and was to continue in force until the further will of the sovereign should be known. Very adroit was the movement, and after it the fear of Velásquez never troubled them. Very adroit; but where lay

the difference between the thing Cortez did, and the thing Balboa had been falsely accused of intending — the charge which had brought him to the block?

Thus they took care of the peril of official treason — the danger in the rear.

The council wrote a long and elaborate report to the King, and Cortez supplemented it with a labored statement of his own loyalty and hopes for the success of the venture. In the enthusiasm over the new arrangement, he even persuaded the council to send with the letters all the gold they had taken — not the royal fifth alone, but all of it — and the various princely gifts of Montezuma. Montejo was given the best of the ships, and made ambassador of the colony. His instructions included the candidly expressed orders of the general and his council that he sail directly for Spain, and that on no account should he make any landing on the Island of Cuba, or hold any communication with Governor Velásquez, or any of his people.

The next move was to be the invasion.

Some other affairs, however, intervened before the start could actually be made, and these things, since they bear vitally on the campaign that followed, are worthy of notice. First, the presence of the fleet, which troubled Cortez. He had been forced to hang one man — his old enemy Juan Escudero, — for trying to make off with a ship.

"Pedro," he said coolly, the night after Montejo sailed, "it grieves me that I must leave here this fleet, when we set out, and all these strong men we brought to sail it for us. I fear we shall need these fellows."

"There must be a garrison as well," said Alvarado.

"A garrison; and we so few." Cortez paused thoughtfully. "I may as well tell you what is in my mind," he went on, at last. "What I am about to do is no new thing in the world, if I remember rightly the learning I once

despised. But it must be done again. Wait." He rapped for his orderly, and bade him bring in the men he had sent for. Presently they entered, three of the under-officers of the fleet, fellows who were in charge of the ships while they rode at anchor. Cortez addressed them pleasantly.

"Men," he said, "I understand you are all anxious to go with me to Mexico-Tenochtitlan, and to have a share in the fighting, and a full soldier's share in the gold, as well as what you claim as mariners?"

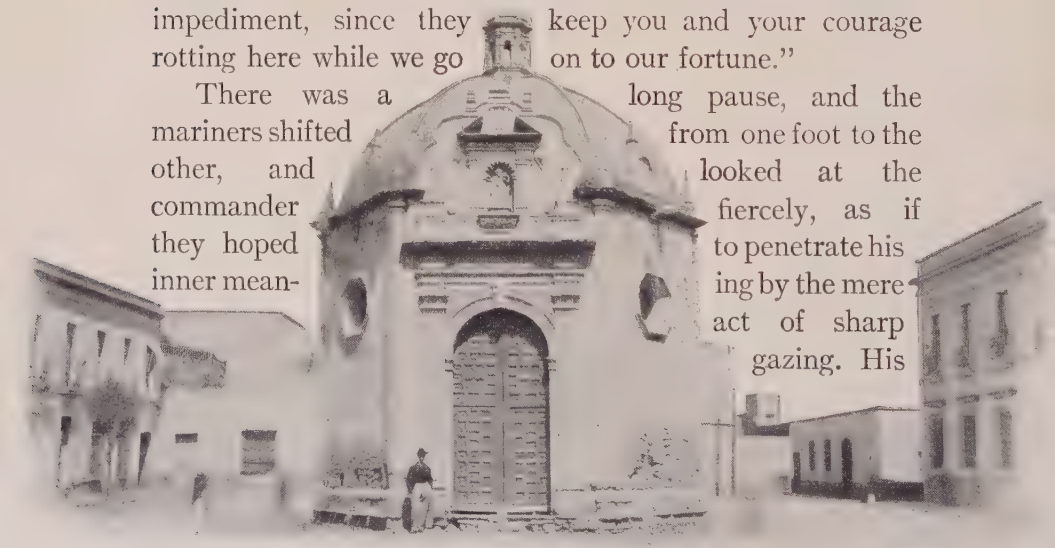
The men agreed instantly to this proposal, though it was by no means as certain as Cortez intimated that the notion had come originally from them.

"I should be glad of your company, and still more happy in the presence of your good swords, when we come to Montezuma's city," the commander remarked, looking at them intently. "But what of our ships?"

"The ships are in bad order, at best," said one of the men. "What with the worms and the rotting of the timbers, they are scarcely worth guarding."

"Ah, but I cannot lose them," Cortez exclaimed, gently. "What if our friends should be taken with fear, and wish to return to Cuba? Nothing must happen to our ships — though I for one can look on them as little better than an impediment, since they keep you and your courage rotting here while we go on to our fortune."

There was a long pause, and the mariners shifted from one foot to the other, and looked at the commander fiercely, as if they hoped to penetrate his inner meaning by the mere act of sharp gazing. His



The Oldest Church in Mexico

smile broadened to something almost like a grin, and then slowly faded, leaving his face hard and resolute. One of the men, a boatswain named Rascar, suddenly took a step forward and spoke out, his voice growling low in his throat, but his eyes ashine with the daring of his thought.

"Your Excellency, I for one am not afraid to speak what we are all thinking. Your army is to be crippled for the sake of watching some rotting ships, and we are to be held here, idle, while you go on to death or victory. Let it not be so, I say. But let us take from the ships what things we need, and then sink them — secretly, if we must, but sink them. For God's love, let us not take council of cowards."

"You are a shrewd man," Cortez answered. "To-morrow I visit Cempoala with the troops. You have spoken your own orders. Good night, Rascar."

He turned again to Alvarado, and they looked into each other's faces, both filled with the fire of the decision. The next day three ships went down, and the crews labored to land whatever movable things there were aboard of them. Some said the work had been done by worms, and others ascribed it to the sinister influence of the new moon, but the officers knew, and the sailors rejoiced. So the work went on, but affairs at Cempoala were too engrossing just then to admit of much discussion about the loss of the ships. That day Cortez compelled the caciques of Cempoala to seize the tax-gatherers of Montezuma, and the town was all astir at the audacity of the act.

Representatives of Montezuma, bearing his official insignia, came quick upon the capture of the tax-collectors, and demanded their release. The caciques of Cempoala were driven back upon their newly-found alliance. Cortez was firm with them, and they met the ambassadors of the King with a pallid defiance, meanwhile confiding the persons

of the captives to the Spaniards for safe-keeping, since the people of the town were much alarmed at the temper of the Aztec lords, who had been sent away in anger. Surely, the throngs in the streets cried out, the wrath of Montezuma will strike us, and only the strong arm of Quetzal' himself can save us; the chiefs, meantime, found themselves more

Sunset on Itzaniiuatl

than ever in the hands of the white men, since their own people were frightened, and the power of Montezuma was imminent. In the coil which he here undertook, Cortez had little time to consider the report that ships were lost, or that the force was now left without means of retreat. He had long before decided that they must go on — that victory was as necessary as life itself. And now he had need of all his cunning: for the wedge was entering the rock, and the blows that were to split the Aztec empire — subtle, silent strokes of Spanish craft — were beginning to fall

The chiefs gave over the tax-gatherers, dull fellows whose

part in the plot they could not themselves understand, to Cortez. Rascar took them into a boat, and in the hours between midnight and dawn they were set ashore, miles to the northward, and bidden to hasten with all speed to Mexico, and give the King secret word that they had been liberated by the white men's captain, as a mark of favor to the King from a god he had forgotten. Then Cortez turned to the chiefs of Cempoala, and let them understand that the captives had escaped, and that he could not be expected to pursue them.

To the hapless caciques, this escape, whether intentional or not, could spell nothing less than ruin.

Cortez, now more than ever bent upon breaking the Totonacs to his will, laid other and still more awful conditions upon them. There had been a number of maidens given to be wives of the soldiers by the town, and these, Cortez now informed the Indians, must be baptized. There was some question over this, and the Spaniards, readier than ever to make their allies feel their power, started for the temples.

It was soon over. The people could not attack in the absence of the chiefs, and these Cortez had left under guard in the great *tecpan* which had been allotted to his use. The party made short work of the wooden idols, toppling them down, rolling them into great piles to be burned in the streets, and, in their stead, setting up crosses on the pyramids.

The town was in an uproar, and the Spaniards were everywhere greeted with black looks and threats. The chiefs came to Cortez, and asked to be allowed to go out and quiet their people, and to assure them of the continued favor of the visitors, who were to be their allies against the Aztecs in case of fighting. Cortez, shrewd as he was, might have made this error, but for Marina, who protested

in her excited fashion, and compelled him to listen, in spite of the tumult.

"Look you, my lord," she exclaimed, "these people may shout, but without their chiefs they may not fight. That is their law. You should kill the chiefs."

"Folly," said Cortez. "Why kill them? You are right, my wise and wonderful maiden. If this is their law, that while I hold their chiefs they cannot fight, it is a thing worth remembering. They shall not slip through my fingers, as the tax men did." With that he gave orders that the chiefs should be kept under close guard, and in a few hours the town grew still again. Later he allowed one of the chief men to speak to the crowd from the temple, and the danger of attack in Cempoala was averted. The alliance was now too firm to be broken, since the men of Cempoala had only the Spaniards to protect them from the wrath of their Emperor, and the chiefs, still in custody, could only work for peace. Meanwhile the tax-collectors were speeding to Mexico with their tidings that they had been saved from the hungry gods of the Totonacs only by the white men and the favor of Quetzalcoatl, god of the four winds.

The reward of this masterly treason and double-dealing came sooner than any one expected. Ambassadors from Montezuma brought the thanks of the monarch for the care Cortez had taken of his servants, and the Totonacs were still further impressed with the power which could so defy the tyrant of the land and live — nay, even be treated with a courtesy Montezuma had never shown an enemy within the memory of his reign. When Cortez returned to Vera Cruz from Cempoala, he took with him, as his honored guests, the chiefs of the city, and a thousand Totonacs in war-gear followed him, eager to serve in his train, and to march with him to the capital.

But the soldiers of his own troops, returning to their

own town, were amazed to find that the fleet had sunk, and that a single open bark lay in the harbor. The talk of the scuttling was open in the barracks, and that night a great crowd, headed by Diego Ordaz, whose melancholy prophecies had for some time discredited him, but who was now reinstated in favor by the men, since it was clear that his bitter sayings about Cortez had been filled with a sort of desolate truth. "Saints in Heaven," they cried, "are we to be caught like rats in a trap! Is there to be no retreat left us? No honorable means of saving ourselves in case of disaster?"

Ordaz, confronted by Cortez, made the error of attempting to review the matter logically, and of showing the men how they had been betrayed. He began by recounting the bad condition of the fleet, and how he had himself reported it. Cortez interrupted him, and admitted the fact, adding that the ships had been leaky and unsafe, but that the progress of the expedition would have been wholly sacrificed in case they had attempted to repair them, so great was the damage. Now, he pointed out, they were ready to march,

CORTEZ DESTROYS HIS FLEET (*From an old print*)

with the Totonac allies at their back, and a hundred or more brave sailors who might now march with them.

His words took hold of the enthusiasm of the men, and even the malcontents were stirred by them. Seeing the wind to be favorable, he advanced a point, and boldly declared that the ships, leaky and worthless as they were, had been sunk by his own orders, and that he rejoiced in it. Thereat Rascar and a group of sailors who had come up raised a cheer, and it spread among the crowd.

"Why, in the name of our country and our faith," cried Cortez, "should we need ships to retreat? We are undefeated. We have nothing to fear from the victories which lie before us. The ships I have scuttled would never serve us to carry back the gold of our conquest. Wherefore, then, should we keep them? Where is the coward who desires them? And for whom, save for cowards, can a means of retreat ever be necessary?"

The spirit of the crowd flamed out at the words, and filled the night with their clamorous cheering. Cortez held up his hand for silence, and in a little while went on.

"There is still one ship," he said grimly. "If there be among you any who are cowards, let them take that bark and sail for Cuba, there to await the return of their comrades after the empire of Montezuma shall have been won and partitioned." No man took the slightest interest in the one bark. "But if there be none among you whom battle can make afraid, or ease lure back to the islands, for whom are we saving the bark? Who shall guard it, and what use can we find for it? Were it not better that it, too, should go down, that no man may be tempted to fear, and no one can impugn the courage of his comrades?"

When he had done, they went in a howling troop to the beach, and fought for places in the boats to go out to the scuttling of the last ship.

CHAPTER XVIII

THE WAR-CHIEF'S COUNSEL

IN the tribal council of Tlascala, sitting in the great *tecpan* of the pueblo, raged a dispute the like of which had never been heard in all the towns of Anahuac. The two war-chiefs, Maxixcatzin and Xicotencatl, presiding over the assemblage, were divided in their opinions, and from time to time they gave over their arguments and questioned the messengers who brought the news, requiring of them the minutest information, since the fate of the State hung upon the decision of the council.

It was true, the messengers insisted, that the white men from beyond the sea were on their way hither, and that they led with their own army a horde of Totonacs from Cempoala, and that the unconquered city of Tlascala, the home of the tribe which alone had resisted the extortions of the tyrant Montezuma, lay in their victorious way. From time to time a chief would break his silence, and the rest would

THE MARSHES OF XOCHIMATEO

listen gravely, each holding his place like a carven idol. So they learned of the numbers and armament of the strangers, learned of their ceremonials, and their cross-symbols, and of the terrible beasts upon which they rode to battle. The two head chiefs, each with his own opinion, listened with the rest

As the hour grew late, and the morning neared, Maxixcatzin arose, flung back his mantle, and spoke his judg-

CORTEZ (*From the portrait in the gallery at Florence*)

ment, gravely and calmly, though his words were desperate in their gloomy meaning.

"The white beings are gods," he said, "and it were folly for us, being men, to resist their will. Where have such things as these ever been in the world of men, or in the broad land of Anahuac? Once they have been seen — once only, and that was when Quetzalcoatl walked our earth, and the four winds blew at the sounding of his war-conch. Let Tlascala make peace with these invading gods, then, and raise altars on the *teocallis* for them, and so gain their blessing if we may. For if we defy them, our town will surely feel their anger, and our fields will be blasted, and our people will die of the madness. So speak I, Maxixcatzin, a war-chief, to you men of Tlascala." With that the older of the two rulers left the council, and his peer, Xicotencatl, rose in his place.

"I have heard the wisdom of the great Maxixcatzin. I know that no fear has ever struck to his heart, and that he is brave as he is wise. Yet I cannot take his words for my food, since there is dust of the desert upon them. Behold, these strangers worship an idol like a cross of Quetzal'. Would gods do so? When Quetzal' set up his altars in Tenochtitlan and Cholula, did he himself bow down to them, or make sacrifice with his own hands?

"The strangers are few, not more than a single clan of us in numbers. Shall we fear this single household, when we are so many? They bring the lowland Totonacs with them as allies. Yet if they be gods, what need have they of the Totonacs, unless it be for sacrifice? And do we fear the Totonacs? This were indeed a mockery, if we, who have never yielded a slave or a quill of gold to Montezuma, should give up our city to the dogs of Cempoala."

In the grave circle a few heads nodded — only a few.

Xicotencatl continued. "Wherefore I say, let us fight,

while it is open to us to fight, not wait till they have builded their fires in our *tecpans*, and fed their beasts on our stored corn. If we fail, and if they conquer us, we may still join them against Tenochtitlan, for they have need of our arrows. So I, Xicotencatl, a war-chief, say to you, men of Tlascala."

The priests who fed the fires which lighted the council-chamber threw on a few billets of wood, and the glow warmed the faces of the men who sat, like still figures of bronze, in the august senate of the pueblo. The war-chief stood when he had finished, and watched with roving eyes that seemed, in the uncertain firelight, the only moving things in the world. Then the vote went round, each, one by one, in a solitary word of approval or negation, casting his decision. The brave wisdom of Xicotencatl triumphed, and the men of the council went out to rouse their clans, so that the morning sun, when it struck with fire the idols on the temple roofs, lighted at the same time the muster of the Tlascalan army.

An array of barbaric magnificence, truly, was that which the war-chiefs led forth from the narrow streets between the the great communal houses; the warriors poured out, armed with arrows tipped with obsidian, javelins with copper blades, slings of raw-hide, and each with his deadly *maquahuitl*, the war-club, double-edged with obsidian, which was ever the final refuge of their hand-to-hand fighting. The men were clad in doublets of quilted cotton, very heavy, and stained with gorgeous colors. Their helmets were of leather, and each was fashioned by rich feather-work into the likeness of a snake, a jaguar, or some beast of terror and prey. Their shields were of leather, ornamented with feathers, and framed upon tough bamboo. The chiefs wore plumes of bright feathers, and all were gay with the savage heraldry of war-paint. The drums thundered and echoed among the pyramids, and the conchs screamed in the clear air of morning.

Yet all this panoply, this primal courage, this legion that marched, as it seemed, in the stout armor of a just cause, was doomed to a swift and mysterious defeat. For every drop of blood that poured that morning, upon the altars of the forgetful and thankless gods of Tlascala, many a Tlascalan life went out before the fall of night. Yet for all that, the Spaniards had not entered the city, and the fighting had not been in vain, since the march of the invaders had been for the moment stopped at a point nearly three leagues away from the city itself. So the counsel of the chief who had been for fighting was not wholly in vain. But the terrors of the cannon, and the still more awful panic which accompanied the cavalry, had made their impress on the tough courage of the defenders. Since these were no common enemies, they said, it might be that the city could not withstand them. It was all as the gods willed. For Xicotencatl and his people there was only battle to be offered, and death to accept if it so pleased the rulers of their fate.

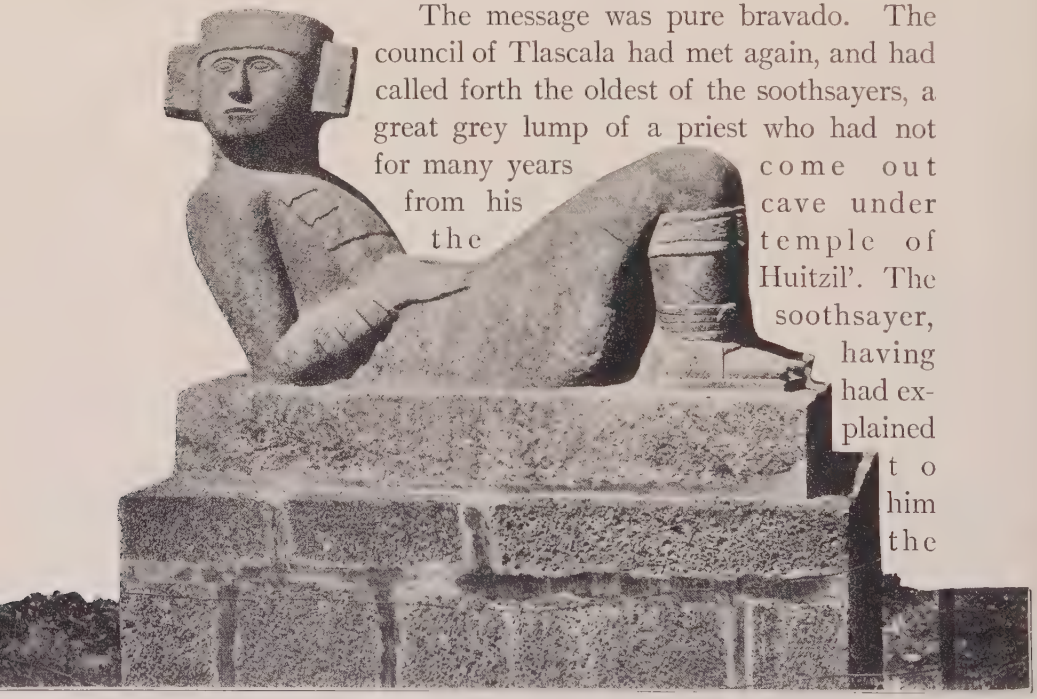
FATHER DE OLMEDO DISSUADING CORTEZ FROM DESTROYING THE TLASCALAN IDOLS

They had retired before the Spanish advance, and Cortez had made camp for the night in a little village from which the inhabitants had fled. There was no food left in the

granaries of the hamlet, but the Spaniards had some supplies of their own, and the allies waited patiently for the dogs of the villagers to come home, whereupon they lighted fires and made merry far into the night.

The next day, having a number of men wounded and needing care, and one or two killed to be buried in secret, Cortez did not advance. Waiting, he soon had signs of the quality of the foe. Toward noon, a great party of burden-bearers approached the village, preceded by ambassadors waving white plumed lances, and carrying a stock of provisions, grain, turkey-cocks, and aloes, with a message from Xicotencatl, saying he did not desire battle with starved foes, and bidding the strangers eat, since, if they were at last to lie upon the altars of the Tlascalan gods, it was not well that they be too gaunt for the sacrifice.

The message was pure bravado. The council of Tlascala had met again, and had called forth the oldest of the soothsayers, a great grey lump of a priest who had not come out for many years from his cave under the temple of Huitzil'. The soothsayer, having had explained to him the



The Statue of Chac-Mool, an Ancient Mexican Idol

peril that menaced the town, and the unprecedented nature of the battle that had that day been fought, blinked and moaned, and gave out his oracle. The white people, he said, were clearly folk of the sun, and in the broad light of the day it had been folly to go against them. But if one went in the night, they might be as men, — even as men of the race of Anahuac, but weaker. It only needed darkness.

"Good," said Xicotencatl. "Let it be so!"

The party which bore the provisions had been instructed accordingly. Having done their errand, they were to divide, part of them returning with news of the condition of the camp, and part remaining with strict orders to set fires wherever they could in the camp that night, that the avenging warriors of the pueblo might have light wherewith to slay their foes, or, if the gods favored, to take prisoners for the sacrifice. The party which had been ordered to return obeyed their instructions. Cortez was not so blind as the Tlascalans had hoped in regard to the others, but had them watched closely, and bade Marina talk with as many of them as she could.

By sunset, she had wheedled out of one of them the saying of the prophet of Huitzil'. This was enough for Cortez, and he suddenly herded them all into an inclosure, and charged them with their treachery, telling them what he already knew or surmised. Broken down by this unearthly cunning, and seeing that it was unwise to conceal anything from the all-knowing gods, the spies confessed.

When it was dark, he sent them back with his word to Xicotencatl and his people. "Tell your chief," he said, "that he will find the arm of Quetzal' as strong by night as by day, and the white men are more terrible in the darkness, since in the gloom there is no mercy left in them." So the spies went back, and every one bore a fresh and bleeding

seal of the truth of the message, and of the merciless heart of the white captain, where his right thumb had been. The barbarian met here the cruelty, refined and subtle, of the mediæval Spaniard, and was afraid.

Swift on the heels of the mutilated spies the cavalry went out, and while the chiefs in the Tlascalan camp were limp with amazement at the penetration of their scheme, the horsemen charged down upon them. The night was instantly filled with lamentation, and the air quivered with the shrieks of panic, the moans of the wounded and dying, and the dread battle-cry, "Santiago, and Victory!"

That ended the resistance. The next day the pueblo surrendered, and the fighting forces of her greatest enemy were joined to the conquering army which threatened the imperial city of Tenochtitlan. In Tlascala Cortez set free the captives, and decreed that there should be no more human sacrifices. But in the very face of his order, the ancient fat prophet of Huitzil' gave his throbbing heart to the gods, and his sacred flesh, in the form of a spiced ragout, to the feasters. False prophets used not to be fortunate.

It was well for the invaders that the resistance ceased when it did, for while they had lost but one man in the fighting, there was not one of the survivors who had wholly escaped the barbed arrows. Most of the wounds were slight enough, but to weary men, sleeping on the ground in the cold night air of the plateau, after the hot, moist climate of the coast, every scratch stiffened and gave torture. The horses, too, had suffered. If the enemy had not sacrificed so much in attempting to take prisoners, the results might have been still more uncomfortable. But at best the Spaniards had good cause to welcome the peace, and were never more glad of any turn in their affairs than that which gave them quarters in the great *tecpan* of the pueblo, with rest, and good food, and an alliance which, being so dearly bought,

Lake Xochimateo, Mexico

was evidently of a lasting character. For the people of the city, with all their terrors and the grievous losses they had sustained, found a comfort in the thought that with these allies they could surely humble the tyrant of the lake, and march in triumph across the causeways into the hated streets of tyrannous Tenochtitlan.

Twenty days the visitors remained in Tlascala, and Cortez gave the strictest orders that during this time the men should conduct themselves with the utmost care, and on no account should their hosts be offended.

Step by step, as he approached the great capital, his position and his force had grown stronger. And now, having at his back the tribe which had been, in the past, almost a match for the great Aztec Confederacy, he felt that the crucial test was at hand. He now had the men, the information, the superstitious awe that attaches itself to some near kin of the high gods, and the courage for the final attack. Nothing was lacking, unless it be that he had not, thus far, a single word of invitation, or a grievance which might excuse invasion, from the head of the Aztec State. From Tlascala he marched to Cholula, and there he found both these things, though not, perhaps, in just the form he would have chosen.

The Cholulans welcomed the Spaniards and the Cempoalan allies into their city — sacred town of Quetzal' though it was — but they insisted that the Tlascalans should not enter. To this Cortez gave consent; and the troops, which were regarded as inveterate enemies of the town, were encamped on the plain outside the walls. Within, the beauty of the streets and squares, the ornamental trees and gardens, and the gentleness of the people charmed the Spanish visitors. Not so did all these things appeal to Xicotencatl, who, with one lieutenant, came into the city among the Cempoalans, disguised. The chief of the Tlascalans, having

once made his alliance with the invaders, was faithful. He came with his eyes open, and all his perceptions sharpened by hatred bred up through all his ancestors. The Cholulans, he said, must be hiding some treachery. It should be sought out and punished.

The night after their arrival he reported to Cortez.

"O Malintzin," he began, addressing Cortez by the name he had among all the Nahautl people, because of Marina, "this day there have been three-year-old children sacrificed in the temples. This means war, for never have the war-gods frowned upon such offerings. Beware!"

"I am come," said Cortez, "to make an end of such abominations."

"You will have need to act quickly against the gods of Cholula," the cacique answered. "I have seen with my own eyes. More than this, I have seen the crackling of the earth along the streets. What means this? It means that there are pits dug and covered with dry withes, and over these the earth scattered, that the beasts you ride may be entrapped and slain. Is this the friendship of Cholula? I have heard, I have seen. I go back to my own warriors. When your thunder sounds, we shall come into Cholula, and defend our friends. Farewell."

"His dogs are hungry," observed Alvarado, as the disguised leader went out into the street.

"It is the hate they bear the Cholulans," said Cortez. "They would raze the city if they could, or if we offered help."

"It may be so," Marina agreed, "but this Xicotencatl risks his heart to tell you these things. I think he may know something. Give me some of the beautiful beads, my lord, that I may give them to an old woman here, who is loose-tongued, and who loves me. To-morrow, I shall know all about it."

AN INDIAN VILLAGE IN MEXICO

The ancient lady who so loved Marina proved fruitful of information, and the beads were sagely invested. It was too sad, said the Cholulan dame, that this lovely girl should be given up to the destruction which awaited the white men; so she took her to her own house, and bade her forget her master. Marina feinted and feigned, and when her hostess was asleep, she came creeping back to the *tecpan* where Cortez had his apartment.

"Awake, my lord!" she cried gleefully. "I have learned what you will wish to know. The Cholulans are false. The pits in the streets are dug, and the soldiers of Montezuma, for the plot is his, are waiting at the bottom. Listen, while Marina tells her sleepy lord the names of the chiefs who counseled peace, and the names of those who were for war, and who have made this black net to cast over your head. Awake, my lord!"

When Marina had done speaking, Cortez went out, and woke Estévan. Together they had the cannons moved silently, so as to command the square and the steps of the great temple. Then they went back to rest, and in the morning he invited in the chiefs and magistrates of the city, telling them that he desired them to give him a guard of their own people to guide him on his way, since the Cempoalans knew the roads no farther. The men of Cholula, fresh from their night of treasonable planning, came in gayly. It was evident, since Malintzin asked them for guides, that he suspected nothing. The old gods, they said, were wiser than the new.

But when Cortez began speaking, the men who had dared to come for the private blessing of Quetzal', or the priest of Quetzal', were flung down from their towering hopes and abased before the invader, to whom their most secret intentions seemed to be intimately known.

"I have been told," said Cortez, "that some of you were for peace, but that the great King Montezuma, by his perfidy, led you into a compact against us, your guests. This I will never believe, but rather that some of you, being false in heart, have incited your people to this crime. Never fear, I shall know those who were true, and I can divide the doves from the eagles."

Thereat, with what seemed to them the wisdom of the primeval serpent, he called out, at the bidding of Marina, the names of those who had counselled submission, and these he ranged beside him, among his own people.

"For the rest of you, men of Cholula," he said in a deep voice that sounded through the tremulous stillness of the great courtyard, "for the rest of you I have only the death you prepared for me and my people. Behold the treason you conceived."

A long moment of waiting, and he looked over the group

of men before him, coldly and slowly, as if marking each one for damnation. The stillness grew terrible, and the Cholulans began to writhe. Here and there one would fall on his knees and strike the pavement with his forehead, in token of the most abject submission. Cortez raised his

Toluca, Mexico

right arm, holding his sword aloft. The crowd wavered as if about to break for the open arches.

Instantly the doorways were filled with Spanish faces, and the brazen glint of armor. Cortez's arm fell, and the place was filled with smoke and the fatal booming of guns. Outside, from the roof of the *tecpan* and the corners of the market square, the cannons answered. In a moment, the blaze of battle was everywhere, and the town rocked with horror. Over the walls the Tlascalans came streaming, eager as bloodhounds, to the feast of the ancient hate.

When the day's work was done, the sacred city had crumbled to dust, and the stain of blood was over all the desolate ruin where it had gloried in its beauty and strength. It was as though the god who had inspired it had turned petulant, and crumbled its cherished walls in iron hands.

But the message to Montezuma brought its answer. "Tell the great King in Tenochtitlan," Cortez sent word by his own ambassadors, "that the Cholulans have said his word underlay their treachery. This will I never believe, since so great a monarch could bring war in the open, if he desired that it should be so, and he would not skulk behind walls, nor fill the streets of his city with pitfalls, treating me, the messenger of a King, as a beast to be trapped. But howsoever men may war upon me, it shall be the same. I am ready."

Having sent this message, he issued a pardon to such of the Cholulans as might still be living to accept it, and waited. The ambassadors returned with word from Montezuma, disclaiming all knowledge of the plot in the city of Quetzal', and warmly, fearsomely, inviting the Spaniards to his capital.

The cloud, no larger than a puff of smoke from the fires of a temple, which had risen along the coast, had swept inland; now, at the beginning of the autumn, it menaced the mountains with its thunder. So the fate of Anahuac moved upon it, and the unfriendly nations crowded to the sacrifice. Still the tyrant of the lake wavered, and temporized, and yielded his hospitality to the violators, unwillingly, perhaps, but with only the most gloomy forebodings of the end. The Spaniards rejoiced, and took up their march, singing, through the garden land that fed the gods of Tenochtitlan.

CHAPTER XIX

THE CITY OF A DREAM

A MAN with haggard face toiled slowly over the last league of his way to Cholula. With bowed but indomitable head, he had followed the weary road that led him where he would be. It was Hernando Estévan.

Of the long nightmare that followed that morning on the shore, he did not care to think. Looking back at it

Popocatepetl and Cholula To-Day

afterward, it seemed as though he had lived in a world of cloudy haze, through which his actions, thoughts, and even he himself, seemed as unreal as moonshine. When he had awakened to the real, bitter knowledge of the tragedy that had befallen him, he had at first asked himself, calmly, where lay the sense in continuing? It was much better, and vastly simpler, to let a quick blade end it. Christina

was gone; why should he not follow in her trail? Why, indeed? And yet somehow there was that in him which kept whispering that he must not so follow. . . . He turned to face his problem; with a sigh he took up life where he had wished to lay it down.

Authentic Portrait of Cortez in the Church of Jesus, Founded by him in the City of Mexico

Of his return from that bitter shore, not much is to be said. The men of Orelva's party, their leader being dead, fell tacitly under the word of Orelva's conqueror. Estévan, scanning the world in his mind's eye, had but one thought, — to get back to Cortez. There, surely, without hand of his own, he could find a blade to do what he himself would not. Under his guidance the men repaired one of the battered ships, and got with her as far as the island of San Juan. There she went down, and half her crew with her. Estévan swam ashore, and took up the trail, the now clearly marked and terrible trail, of the army from

overseas. To Cortez, pondering in his quarters, came Estévan, with the weariness and greyness of his journey in his face.

"I have come back," he said to Cortez simply; and reeled against the wall.

Cortez, with a cry half delight, half concern, leapt forward, and throwing his arm about Estévan's shoulders, he led him to a couch. Little was said between the two men. Estévan told nothing, and Cortez did not ask.

"I am glad you are with me once more," he said, simply; and that was all.

Three days later, from Cholula, the march went forward, — with ceremony now, ceremony as well as caution. The Tlascalans and Cempoalans followed, so that the effect was not that of a troop but of an army. Town after town they entered, and from each they took the easy tribute of conquerors who pass as guests.

The road continued to ascend, and many a Spaniard, acclimated to the heat of the sea-level coast and the islands, found his breath short and his heart shaking within him. The wealth of verdure and the intensity of cultivation increased as they went forward, so that they trod down gardens that encroached upon the roadways, marveling at the fertility of the soil.

At length the upward way reached its height. On the great ridge of Ithualco, between the two guardian peaks with their smoking craters, the road led out upon a cliff; before them, ringed with peaks that melted into the horizon, lay the valley. The air was clearer than the Alpine day. A vision, we say:— a miracle! The Adventurers — the good men and true, the evil-handed followers of plunder, the black rinsings of the Moorish wars — all alike were smitten as by a spell, the spell of luminous, ineffable, uncomprehended beauty; the lakes that netted the bosom of the

valley with blue and silver; the gardens that tinted the outspread gleaming cities as with vapors of emerald and turquoise; the still circle of embracing peaks; and behind it all the sense of the alien, the mystic.

CORTEZ'S FIRST GLIMPSE OF MEXICO-TENOCHTITLAN

To match that moment on the ridge of Ithualco, one must lead forth the army of a dream and storm the walls of Nineveh, or encompass hundred-gated Thebes with imaginary legions. In truth, it was more wonderful than either, since in that hour Cortez and his fellows came face to face with a presence, a life, an empire, which stood rooted, farther back than Troy or the first dynasty of Egypt, in the very dawn of history.

In order that the events which followed may be easily understood, it is perhaps best that the city of Montezuma be pictured in some detail. The coming of Cortez to the chief pueblo was a great and dramatic event. The city

itself was a place like none now existing in the world, and even a passing view of it is worthy of our attention, since recent study of the works of those who followed Cortez has brought out many new truths, and has overthrown many old and romantic lies which have long passed for sober fact.

The city stood on an island in the great salt lake of Tezcuco, which, with the sister lake of Chalco, filled the bed of the valley. Because the lake was salt, and the city needed a constant and usable water supply, an aqueduct of solid stonework and cement led to it across the narrow strait, bringing the clear mountain springs of Chapultepec into the heart of the town. Aside from this aqueduct there were three entrances by the causeways. These were dykes of masonry, straight and level, crossing the end of the lake and leading directly into the main thoroughfares whereby the city was divided into four quarters. The causeways were about ten yards wide, and this, since there were no vehicles save litters borne by men to travel upon them, was ample for all purposes. Yet, now and then, when a market day in the harvest season came on, they were intolerably crowded, and there were frequent mishaps, as when slaves and gardeners went over into the briny lake, and the jostling throng rocked with impatient laughter. Near the island, the dykes were set with wooden drawbridges, worked with cords of plaited rawhide. As a means of defence, the causeways would have served against all the hosts of Anahuac, had they gathered in rebellion.

Besides the causeways, the town could be entered by canoes at many landing-steps, and the water traffic was heavy in all seasons. But the calm salt waters bore up craft other than canoes — craft which struck the Spaniards with wonder, both for beauty and strangeness; the lagoons between the causeways were lined with square scows or rafts,

heavily loaded with rich soil, carefully tended and watered, and filled with all the heavy blooms and plants known to the cunning of the Aztec gardener. These floating gardens are to be noticed particularly, in that they indicate some of the sources of strength and weakness in the Aztec state. If there had been soil enough, the rafts would have been unnecessary; if, lacking the soil, the people had been less industrious, they would never have been built; for the labor involved was great, and because gardening was one of the most honorable occupations among Montezuma's subjects, it was labor performed by free men for the common good.

In the city itself, the houses were built of sun-baked brick, and of red stone, cemented with hard mortar. Most of the stone buildings were plastered with white gypsum, both inside and out, so that the prevailing color was gleaming and snowy. The houses were for the most part very large, each one being in reality a system of dwellings held in common by a clan or family. They were not more than two stories high, and the broad, flat roofs, many of them equipped with awnings of woven cotton, served as outing places for the people. The walls, enough higher than the roofs to provide guard-rails, so that the little brown children might play in safety, were strengthened at the corners and at irregular intervals by towers, so that the appearance presented was that of a town every house of which was castellated, a labyrinth of strongholds.

On the roofs, besides the towers for battle and the awnings for babes, were great ornamental gardens, with flowering shrubs and clipped trees. Flowers and the fragrances of gardens meant a great deal to the Aztecs, and their joyous songs were filled with the beauty of them, sweet odors and bright colors, and the delight of watching wonderful plants unfold. But the buildings were not all of this type — not

THE CITY OF MEXICO AT AN EARLY DAY (*From a sixteenth-century engraving*)

all harmonious dwellings of great households, peaceful within and perfumed without. The houses of the gods were otherwise.

As in all the cities of Mexico and Yucatan, the temples were pyramids, with terraced sides, landings at intervals, and winding ascents, so that the gorgeous processions wound back and forth on their way to the summit. The tops of these truncated pyramids were great rectangular level roofs. On them were the idols, carved in wood or stone, and invariably smeared about the lips with horrid red. In the center of the roof of each was a rounded stone of jasper, high enough so that the breast of the victim to be sacrificed, pressed upward and outward as his form was stretched across the stone, was in convenient reach of the priest.

The ceremony was usually simple enough. The screaming captive was laid across the dreadful block, his arms and legs pinioned, his bosom bare. A single deep, slashing cut with a knife of flint, and the high-priest of Huitzil' could put in his practiced hand and tear forth the throbbing heart.

The temple roofs were washed only by the rains, and Mexico is not a rainy land. The smell of these reeking shambles mingled with the sweetness of the gardens. It was not all for the song's sake that the Aztecs covered their roofs with flowers. And it is well to remember, too, when men decry the work of Cortez and his friends, saying that he destroyed a civilization, that the victims of the gods were numbered by thousands, and that the bodies, once the hearts had been given to the hungry idols, were dismembered and borne down to the kitchens of the spreading, peaceful, communal houses. The people of Mexico, for all their centralized government, their hieroglyphics, their roads and causeways, and their gardens, were eaters of human flesh.

But to return to the houses themselves, since it is necessary that we understand, as well as may be, the state of society prevailing when Cortez came. These structures, with their battlements and turrets, enclosed great courtyards, upon which the windows for the most part opened. Windows in the outer walls were mere slits, letting in a narrow blade of sunlight, and chamfered to allow the

THE LAKE FROM THE HILL OF PENON

arrows of the defenders to pass more freely. Glass there was none. Doorways were curtained, and might in emergency be barricaded, but hinged doors had not been invented.

The ceilings were of cedar and fine woods, well wrought and joined. The walls were whitewashed, and frequently, in the apartments of the nobility, covered with tapestries of richly dyed cotton, or with gorgeous feather-work. There were low stools, a few tables, and woven mats, which also served for beds.

The people were clad in flowing garments of colored cotton, and wore head-dresses of feather-work and leather. Gold was abundant enough in the form of jewelry, but was seldom used as a medium of exchange, and then only in the form of dust packed in quills. The business of the markets was carried on by barter and exchange. The taxes and tributes, collected with such regularity by the agents of the King, came in the form of grain, or cotton, or slaves, or even captives for the sacrifices;

Fountain of the old Aqueduct in the City of Mexico

for the gods of Tenochtitlan, as well as her people, had to be fed.

The land about the city which could be cultivated was limited in extent, and the floating gardens were small. So it became necessary, since the people were many, to go abroad for maize and meat. Hence the growth of the Aztec Confederacy, which we sometimes speak of as Montezuma's empire. Roads had to be built that the taxes might be swiftly brought home. Tribes had to be conquered that the tribute might be levied. War became a necessity, since the gods went hungry when there were no captives.

And with wars, and conquests, and the wealth of accumulated taxes, came the power of the State. But Montezuma, though a King in fact, and the son of a King, was in law a war-chief and head-priest, elected like any chief, and like any priest devoted to the service of the gods. As priest he was anointed and holy; as chief he was invincible. Perhaps it is not too much, in view of his power, to call him Emperor.

But what shall an emperor do when a god defies him? How shall a city defend herself, when an army comes against her with thunder and the ruin of lightning in leash? And how may a State withstand the onset of ten thousand years?

When Montezuma went out on the causeway, in his royal litter, with the sacred bird-crown on his brow, to welcome his guests, it was as one who goes solemnly to his doom. For if the city was strange to Spanish eyes, and curious, as something brought up from the spring of time, how much more strange were Spaniards to the city. We may imagine the storming of Nineveh — yes. But can we picture the feelings of a man who has lived his life, eaten and drunk and loved and gloried, in Nineveh,— when the armies of our vision come upon him?

CHAPTER XX

THE VIGILANT GUESTS

SLOWLY the army of Cortez wound along the shore of Lake Chalco, crossed the causeway to Cuitlahuac, and rested. This was the first town they had seen built in a lake, and it reminded the Spaniards — such of them as had traveled — of Venice, having canals for streets, and gardens overhanging the water. From Cuitlahuac they marched on, passing the other side of the town's causeway, and came to Iztapalapan, where again they rested. Before them, at the end of the long causeway, the City of Mexico lay open.

POPOCATEPETL, FROM THE SACROMONTE

Early the next morning, November 8, 1519, they set forth on the dyke, marching in close order, and

stopping now and then for sheer wonder. Surely no such vision has ever dawned upon the eyes of modern man.

"This," said Bernal Diaz, "is like to the enchanted castles in the tale of Amadis of Gaul: towers and castles and temples, all reared in solid masonry out of the water, and all the work of some enchantment."

"Tales — old tales," said Alvarado. "God send we may never have to fight our way across these bridges."

THE MEETING OF CORTEZ AND MONTEZUMA

Cortez took him up quickly. "That is as we ourselves contrive," he observed. "For myself, I prefer that the King invite us, and welcome us. If there is to be fighting, it must be when we can choose our own time, and our own ground. It all depends on one thing — our own vigilance."

"One thing else," Alvarado persisted. "Vigilant we must be, but we must be feared. The one is as needful as the other."

Far down the dyke ahead of them they saw a slowly moving procession bearing a litter with green awnings above it. The King was on his way to welcome his guests.

The meeting of Cortez and Montezuma occurred near the drawbridges. The attendants put down a rich carpet, Montezuma stepped from his palanquin, and slowly advanced to meet his guest. His head was shaded by the fan-shaped feather crown, green and rose-color, with the golden beak — the sacred emblem of Huitzil'. His robe was of blue, and his sandals, linked plates of gold, clanked as he walked. On his right hand came his brother, Cuitlahautzin, whom in later days the Spaniards came to know better, to their sorrow. The King and his brother were both strong men, in the prime of life, straight and tall and commanding. At the King's left, and a little behind, since he was in some disfavor at the time and was not among those who advised the invitation to the white men, was Guatomotzin, a younger chief, bolder of eye, and less hospitable of aspect than his uncle, the King. Marina translated the greetings which passed between the royal party and the newcomers.

Then, with state and solemnity, and the more slowly because of the dense crowd, the whole party from the town turned, and together they made their way back. Montezuma accompanied Cortez to the house he had placed at the disposal of his guests. It proved to be a great *tecpan*, ample to hold the Spanish force and a thousand of the allies, and well provided with grain and provisions. Before night, Cortez had arranged his guards, placed his cannon, and had even begun, by every expedient which he could devise, his study of the conditions in the city.

As usual, he assumed that there must be two parties in the capital, and that the minority must have favored resistance to his coming. It was necessary, then, to enter into communication with one party or the other, either to quarrel with his foes or serve his friends, in order that the division

might be made evident, and that the rift, which he thought must exist, might be widened.

For while the face of the city was smiling with welcome, the work of Spain had to wait. He had come in upon an unwilling host, he knew, and the welcome could not be genuinely felt, but must have been dictated by fear. He had brought into the walls a great troop of Tlascalans, who were looked upon by the citizens with hatred — and hunger; and by the priests with eyes of shameless longing. He had brought in a new religion, and a suggestion of the cult of Quetzal', for which the carrion birds of Huitzil' and the black Tezcatlipoca hated him. For the day, they might look upon him as a god — but in a month, when his comings and goings, his eating and watching and prayer had grown familiar? No; it was needful that he act quickly. And still the city smiled upon him, and he dreaded the peace and plenty more than any open war. This was not like Cholula or Tlascala. The invaders were caught in a trap of their own choosing; were the water-supply once cut off, or the grain consumed and no more provided, they should be left to starve in this glittering fortress, or fight their way out across the interminable causeways.

Six days went by, and Cortez decided upon his course. If Montezuma could be captured, if the sacred person of the King could be brought to reside in the house of the strangers, all might yet be well. If not, they must look to their own lives, for all their victories would avail them nothing.

The pretext came when word reached the *tecpan* that one of the King's officials, a governor named Quauhpopoca, had quarreled with the garrison at Vera Cruz, that there had been fighting, and that Spaniards had been slain in the mêlée. Cortez, with Estévan, Alvarado, Marina, and a strong guard, heavily armed, immediately marched to the palace and bespoke an interview with the King.

"An evil word has come to me," Cortez began courteously. "My servants, and the soldiers of the King my master, have been set upon and killed, and the word is that a man of yours, a governor in your Majesty's service, has done this."

CORTEZ AND MONTEZUMA

"I have heard something of this," Montezuma replied, "and I have ordered that the Governor Quauhpopoca be recalled."

"This is not enough, your Majesty."

"Listen, then, to my commands." He called a messenger, and gave orders that the ill-starred Quauhpopoca be immediately brought home, condemned to death, and delivered for examination to Cortez before the execution of the sentence.

"Good," said Cortez, when Marina had translated the order. "But I have heard more of this matter than the King. The governor who attacked my garrison did so by instruction. I have been told, and the rumor, base as it is,

is all abroad, that the order for the blow was delivered by your Majesty in person."

Montezuma shrank back from the insolence of the suggestion, but replied nothing.

"Guilty as Judas," muttered Alvarado.

"I know," Cortez pursued suavely, "how false and unworthy is this rumor, and how incapable of treachery to a friend and a guest is the sublime Montezuma. I say I know how this falsehood has wounded your Majesty — but what would you? The people in the streets will chatter."

"True," said Montezuma. "I do not rule over the birds that carry evil reports. I can do nothing in this."

"There is one thing," Cortez suggested gravely. "It is my duty to inquire into this affair, and to report the truth to my King, across the seas. These rumors should cease. Might it not be well that your Majesty give to his people some proof of the favor in which he holds us, his guests and most humble servants? Might not such a mark of our mutual love and trust quiet this babbling, and make safe the roads of your kingdom to my people?"

"I have ever shown you the utmost marks of my friendship," Montezuma returned doubtfully, seeing that the talk led to a point he did not wish to meet. "My servant who has offended you shall die. Let the matter rest so, and come now to my garden, for I have other and pleasanter things — "

"Alas," Cortez exclaimed, as if much chagrined at the King's shuffling, "that my favor should be so soon clouded, and that my mission in your land should be so little beloved! I have not, till now, asked anything of your Majesty, and here, at the mere hint of it, I am put off."

Montezuma turned squarely toward him. "Speak," he said quietly, "the King hears you."

"I was about to suggest," began Cortez, "that the lies

THE PRESENTATION OF PULQUE TO MONTEZUMA (*From the painting in the National Museum of Mexico*)

against your Majesty be stilled, and that your people be given proof of the love you bear us, even as we offer proof of the respect in which we hold you. There is one way in which this might be done."

"Yes?" the King assented, interrogatively.

"If your Majesty should do us the honor, which is almost beyond my audacity to ask, save when I think of the slander against you and the greatness of him I serve — if your Majesty would do us the honor to come with us to the house you have given us, and there for a time to be our guest, that all the people may know we are friends eternally — "

"What you ask," said Montezuma slowly, "is impossible."

Cortez bit his lip, and there was a strained silence in the courtyard.

"Am I to understand," Cortez asked at length, "that the King has ceased to love us, or that he fears to sleep under our roof? Or is it — " he paused and lowered his voice, so that his words came thin and hissing between his teeth — "that the black rumor of the streets is true? When the Quetzal' whom you remember in your songs came among you, was he so scorned? And are we so weak, so helpless, that the King despises us?"

The threat that ran through his words never became so obvious that Montezuma would be forced to recognize and resent it, but it was clear enough. Cortez spoke further in the same strain, and his tone carried its message so plainly that Marina left many of his words untranslated. The King stood motionless, but his eyes wandered from one face to another, and there was in their expression the look of a hunted animal at bay. Cortez saw that he was irresolute, and pressed him hard, caressing him with soft words, and gradually advancing from one position to another, until it became necessary for the King to accede to

his invitation or reply with open defiance. In the end, they went back to the *tecpan*, and the Aztec ruler marched in state at their head. Not as a prisoner — far from it, Cortez insisted. But the lesson of Cempoala had not been in vain.

This day's work was the real pivot of the conquest. An hour of subtle talk, and the power of the King became the power of Cortez; their positions as guest and host were reversed; the tribal council of Tenochtitlan met in the *tecpan* of the white man, and Cortez, through the orders of Montezuma, governed the land of Anahuac.

So the winter passed, and there was no move, no crisis, no fighting worthy of the name. Yet the city hated its guests more bitterly than ever, and the gods hungered for the salt taste of blood on their carven lips.

In the matter of collecting treasure the winter was not so satisfactory. Some said that Guatomotzin had sunk the treasures of the city in the lake, and others declared that the place had never been rich in gold, owing to the simplicity of the natives in regard to the value of the metal. Cuitlahuatzin, the King's brother, had also been accused of conspiracy against the Spaniards, and was held in captivity in the *tecpan*, unknown to Montezuma. Quauhpopoca arrived in the city in due time, and was burned at the stake as a traitor; which in itself was of small consequence unless it may serve as an example of the audacity with which Cortez worked. When the fires for the execution of the unfortunate governor were built, Alvarado and Estévan went about the city and collected a great mass of arrows and javelins to burn him with, so that the justice of the white men sweepingly consumed in a single fire both their foe and the weapons which might have been used to avenge him.

The work of converting the city to the Christian faith

lagged even more painfully than the gold gathering, since Father Olmedo was not desirous of some sudden shift, not deeply rooted in the heart of the people, and Cortez was watchful of any action on the part of his friends which might precipitate the struggle which so evidently impended. They did take one of the *teocallis* in the great area of temples,

The City of Pueblo, Popocatepetl in the Distance

however, throw down its idols, and there set up their crosses. The holy sacrifice of the mass was celebrated there, in the presence of a horde of wondering natives, who attributed the whole proceeding to some forgotten teaching of Quetzal'; but Montezuma, who was the chief priest of his people as well as their commander, would none of it, and Olmedo was not ready to press his arguments with the crowd until he had exhausted his resources upon the King.

Spring brought other news, and other problems, urgent

matters which drove from the minds of the officers all their troubles with the stubborn Emperor and the property of the gold-workers. There were conferences, and secret meetings, and Cortez rejoiced that he had the excellent governmental machinery of the Aztec State at his disposal.

A few days after the first rumor had been received from Sandoval at Vera Cruz, a hurried party arrived at the capital, and delivered to Cortez six bound captives. The *tecpan* was in a ferment, and the soldiers were mad with curiosity and excitement. Here was a new face on the situation, they said, and the long, dull season of vigilance was over. Now there would be action.

The bound captives were not Indians, but Spaniards, and one of them was a priest. The news which their arrival spread was the fact that Panfilo de Narvaez had landed at San Juan de Ulúa with a force of 1200 men, and that he bore a warrant from the Cuban governor, bidding him arrest Cortez as a traitor and a rebel, and take into his own hands the government of Mexico as the representative of Velásquez, in the name of the King of Spain.

CHAPTER XXI

A BLUNDER AND A VICTORY

NARVAEZ threatened, and Narvaez had three men for every one in Cortez's army. The one thing Cortez could not afford to do was to wait for this force to be added to the silent millions who stood against him.

Cortez released the captives who had been sent him, and gave them presents; to comfort them, he said, for the

A Mexican Plantation

inconvenience under which they had labored through the fault of his lieutenant. They had been angry enough at their capture, but now they were ready to make what profit they could from his favor. The priest, Guevara, was impressed by the missionary opportunities of the situation in the capital, and he furnished Cortez what information he needed.

"By what order is Narvaez sent?" Cortez asked him.

"By the order of Governor Velásquez."

"With what am I charged?"

"Treason and rebellion."

"Reverend father," Cortez inquired quizzically, "how does it seem to you? Look about you. I rule this country, house its Emperor under my own roof, and collect its tributes. Who serves the King better: I, who have done these things; or they, who have merely envied me the success I have won?"

"In truth," said Guevara immediately, "it seems to me that you do."

"So. And how difficult would it be, think you, to convince the men of Narvaez's army of that, if one had the opportunity?"

"I can only say," Guevara answered cautiously, "that the love they bear to Narvaez would not hold them long away from the fruits of your toil, if you offered them."

"Good," said Cortez. "They shall be offered, for I have need of many more soldiers."

THE STREET MARKET OF GUADALAJARA

He sent Father Olmedo on an embassy to Narvaez the next day; his message was a conciliatory one, saying that he was ready to share with Narvaez the dangers and glories of the conquest; or that he would submit to him in any demand which might be made — on condition, of course, that the demand be authorized by a commission from the King. The whole embassy, obviously, was a blind. It was generally known that Narvaez had no commission from the King, and further, that he had sworn to hang Cortez as a rebel in any case. So Cortez took 300 men, left Alvarado in charge of the city, and set out to get his reinforcements.

Estévan, marching out with this troop, noticed with pleasure the gala appearance of the city. It was nearing the time of the great festival of Tezcatlipoca. Everywhere the people were carrying flowers and weaving garlands, and little groups of maidens, dainty in their robes of white and their chains of blossoms, danced through the streets, singing. Under the awnings by the baths, along the shore, he saw the barbers, solemnly and laboriously shaving the warriors with their razors of flint and obsidian, while the victims sat stoically and endured the process; since the festival was nearly upon them it behooved every one to look his best, even though the ordeal might be painful. So the æsthetic ideas of the Romans strove with the inconveniences of the Stone Age. But it was all very pleasant, quaint, and beautiful. That morning Marina had explained the meaning of the festival; how there had been a young man chosen, twenty days before, and how he had been wedded to four brides; how in the interim he was being feasted and served; and how on the festival day he would go with the procession to the great temple, and would there be worshiped as the incarnation of the mighty Tezcatlipoca; after which he would be sacrificed in the

usual manner, and morsels of his sacred flesh would be sent out to the temples everywhere, to be eaten with hymns and dancing. So that was to be the grisly end of the matter; but for the present, it was beautiful and joyous enough.

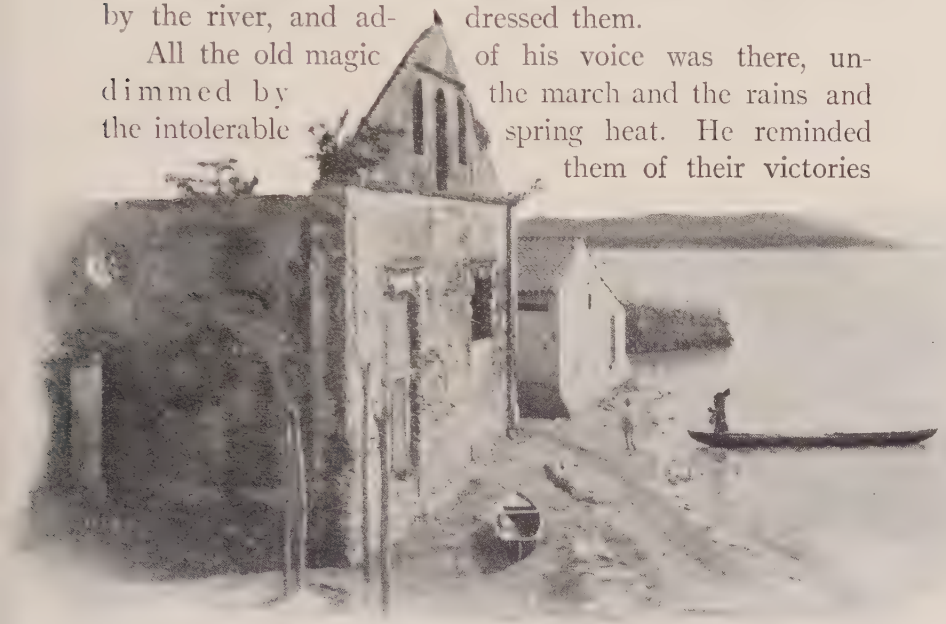
The march from Mexico-Tenochtitlan to the coast was one of long stretches, little rest, and all the slimy discomforts of work in the rainy season. Over the great expanse of the Tierra Caliente they forced the men without pause or relief; if there had been any discontent at the inaction of the camp in the city, it was scattered now. But the same watchfulness, the same vigilance which had, during the winter in the great *tecpan*, accustomed them all to sleep in their quilted suits, with their arms virtually in their hands, had to be maintained on the forced journey back to Cempoala. The result of it all was, however, that they came into the neighborhood of Narvaez's force three full days before they could have been expected.

It was well that they did, for the men were worn out. The last day was an especially hard one, the trail being deep in mud, and the weather alternating between drenching rain and bright, windless sunshine, when the earth and everything upon it steamed in the moist heat. A rumor of their coming reached Narvaez toward evening, and he led out his force, looking upon it as a drill rather than an actual preparation for attack. His numbers gave him an obvious advantage. But his officers were concerned at the discomfort of the men in awaiting a foe whom they did not expect, with the storm approaching, and Narvaez yielded to their protest and took his troops back to Cempoala, where he disposed them luxuriously in the main *teocalli*, with the cannon neatly grouped in the courtyard below.

At sunset, Cortez came to the little River of Canoes,

the stream they had so often forded at the knee-deep shallows while they had been in camp at Cempoala. Now they found it a raging torrent. The sky was patched with bronze-color and purple in the west, and there was a constant play of lightning among the hills to the south. Cortez called them all around him in a little palm grove by the river, and addressed them.

All the old magic of his voice was there, undimmed by the march and the rains and the intolerable spring heat. He reminded them of their victories



Ruins in Alvarado, Mexico

and of the dangers they had passed, of the glory they had achieved, and the wealth they had hopes of obtaining. He reviled the governor bitterly, and even more bitterly defied the leaders of the attack, who were, he said, led by two generals — Avarice and Envy — officers under whom neither he nor any of his men had ever fought. He gave them a countersign and a battle cry: "Espiritu Santo!"

"If you would sleep to-night in the temple at Cempoala," he said, in conclusion, "rather than here amid the dripping palms, you have only to follow me as you have always

followed. In the darkness and the storm they can never count us, and our valor shall make us like a host. Forward, then, and hold together when the storm breaks. Care well for your powder, and for God's love, keep close along the walls if they open on us with cannon. So shall we add one more victory, and the foe we will take back with us to help us with our greater victory, the conquest which shall make us all immortal."

At that they all took heart, and there was more of spirit and courage among the rain-soaked crew in the palm grove than in all the dry and discontented company who had followed Narvaez back to the temple, at Cempoala.

There was a keener vigilance as well. The attack was delivered in the very height of the storm, when the lightning showed the way in, and the thunders redoubled the uproar of the guns. From the first there was every evidence that the surprise was complete. Estévan and Sandoval, with their troop, found their way to the cannon at the beginning of the strife; and, while there was little chance to use the guns, their capture added to the fright of the enemy.

In the inclosure of the temple, where the struggle was fiercest, a strange troop of allies enrolled themselves under Cortez's banner; he could not have been more surprised had he been aided by the god Quetzal' in person. The tumult and the scuffling of the men as they felt their way along the walls aroused a cloud of *cocuyos*, great tropical fire-flies or phosphorescent beetles, and these wandering lights, mingling with the matches of the musketeers, confused the men who had just come out from the lighted temples into the thunderous night.

"Matchlocks!" they cried, and fled back into the *teocalli*, believing themselves surrounded by thousands.

Narvaez, with a small party, defended the roof valiantly,

till a pike wound clove through his cheek and deep into the socket of his eye. He fell, blinded and raving with pain and the shock of the defeat. That ended the resistance. Cortez threw the wounded leader into chains, and all that night he kept up his attack in another form. Where he had enforced his way with the sword, he now undertook to win by words. The wrangling, promising, boasting, and arguing continued till nearly dawn. When the battle of words was over, he was assured of his purpose. The entire force of his pursuers had agreed to follow him back to Tenochtitlan, and from that hour to accept him as general and commander in all things. Considered as a military victory, the night's fighting was too irregular for glory: as a *tour de force* of craft, it was a masterly bit of work.

The situation was not wholly cleared by the capture of Narvaez, as Cortez soon discovered. There were still the Indians to reckon with, and news of the dispute among the white men had spread far and wide. Narvaez had announced that he was on his way to liberate Montezuma, and had even sent word to the Emperor, assuring him of his friendship. This had offended the Tlascalans and all the tribes hostile to the Aztec Confederacy, and it was now necessary for Cortez to retrace his steps, and to explain as he went the defeat of the Spaniards who had come against him. In view of this, there could be no assumption of invulnerability, no suggestion of kinship with the gods. From this time forward he was to be recognized as a man and a leader of warriors — invincible, perhaps, but in no wise mysterious. This put all his affairs on a new footing, and the return to Tenochtitlan promised to bring fighting.

Before they left Cempoala, Narvaez sent for Estévan, saying he carried a message for him, and being a man of honor, he was ready to fulfill a pledge he had made, how-

ever deeply he might still hate the enemy whom he was forced to serve.

In compliance with this grim invitation, Estévan visited the fallen leader in his darkened room, in the upper story of the *teocalli*. Panfilo was lying on a bed of palm mats, his wound bandaged with cotton bands which swathed his entire head, leaving only his nose and his one remaining eye visible, his mouth being obscured by the flapping ends with which the whole dressing was tied. Narvaez recognized him instantly when Estévan entered, and his visitor was startled to see how much of hatred could be conveyed in the sinister twitch of the one visible eyebrow.

"Before I left Cuba," Narvaez began huskily, "I promised Bartholomew de Las Casas, who is a persuasive fellow, for all his white-livered lunacy about the rights of the heathen, that I would give you a message from him, even if I had to hang you afterward. It seems I am not to have the pleasure of hanging you."

"Fortune of war," observed Estévan, laconically. "And the message, señor?"

Narvaez chuckled audibly, and a spasm of pain went through him, cutting off his inward laughter sharply.

"Ah, yes, señor — the message. If you wish me to speak faster, it is a thing you should have thought of before you thrust through my eye. It seems you had missed — was it your wife?"

Estévan was on his knees beside the wounded man instantly. He forgot the quarrel in which they had been engaged, and all his soul hung upon the utterance of the shattered messenger. He was ready to make any sacrifice, perform any service, hoping only that he was to be delivered from the uncertainty which had so long oppressed him.

"Yes, yes," he exclaimed eagerly. "Tell me, for the love of the Holy Virgin, what word is it you bring me?"

THE VISIT OF CORTEZ TO MONTEZUMA *(From the painting in the National Museum of Mexico)*

Narvaez groaned. "If you had only thought of this before your dogs set upon me," he muttered. "It 's late, now. So it was your wife, eh?" Dark as it was in the room, Estévan caught an expression of devilish amusement in the eye that looked out from the swathings.

"I pray you not to torment me," besought Estévan.

"No? And why not, if I choose? I have had torments enough. The vane turns. Your wife — eh? Ran away, did she?"

Estévan was silent, enduring the jibes patiently, fearing to lose the precious communication by any display of temper.

"So even if I have not the pleasure of bringing your treason to justice, I can bring your little billets from Las Casas. It is indeed fortunate that we should meet again and that I may serve you, Señor Estévan, in this delicate personal matter. It gives me great pleasure. So your wife ran away? Very droll, that. I resent the amusement, however, since it makes me smile, and to smile in this state is a torture."

"I beg of you, señor, have done with this, and give me the message. It 's my very life you 're smiling at."

"So you grudge me my jest, do you? The message — the message! Have it, then. Las Casas has found your wife."

Estévan turned away for a moment, quite overcome, and a little prayer of thanksgiving escaped his lips. He was recalled to attention by Narvaez's sardonic chuckle.

"Such haste to give thanks," sighed the wounded man, mockingly, "such haste. I should have expected you to wait for other information."

"Tell me," Estévan cried out, sharply. "You jeer at your life's peril. Tell me what you know of this."

"Threats — to a wounded captive. Fie, fie, señor."

Panfilo was about to launch forth into more derisive reflections, but the fervent, desperate face of the man leaning over him was so unspeakably eager, and there was something in the tense expression of it that brooked no ridicule. A tremor went through the prostrate frame, and the voice changed. "I know nothing more, but I have a letter. Bring me a torch, that I may pick it out from my dispatches. I must ask you to permit me some privacy in the matter, and to retire to the end of the room while I inspect my papers. Your commander has not yet required them of me, and I must hold them safely while I may."

Estévan brought a torch, and assisted Narvaez to a more comfortable position. He then retired to the corner of the room and stood waiting, with smothered impatience, while the other unlaced his packet, and deliberately ran over the papers.

At length he selected one, on which, even at the length of the apartment, Estévan could distinguish a familiar seal, and slowly wrapped and laced the others, returning the packet to the breast of his hauberk. Estévan started to approach, but Narvaez waved him back.

"I think this is the letter," came in a quavering voice from among the bandages, "but the pain in my head is like the flame of this torch. I can scarcely read the superscription, señor." There was no mockery in this, for the continued use of the unwounded eye, even for so short a time, had given maddening distress. Panfilo raised himself on one shoulder, pressing his hand to his eye as if to clear his vision by main force. "You should have thought of it before your devils put their pikes to my head," he growled.

Then, before Estévan could make a step forward, he thrust out his hand and held the paper in the flame of the torch, where it curled into ash immediately. Estévan

stood rooted to the spot, smitten by the light of the burning paper as by a blow.

"I have given you the message I was pledged to," said Narvaez, in a hard, dry voice. "Las Casas has found your wife. How, and where, and with whom, — all this was in the letter. I know nothing of it. It 's droll — damnably droll, señor."

Church Door in the City of Mexico

A rocking, chokinglaugh seized him, and the bandages shook with it even while the pain of the movement changed to sound, to a great, wrenching groan. Estévan's hand sought his sword, and he watched, in a sort of fascinated rage, the agony of the other's mirth. At length he took a step forward. As he did so, Bernal entered, shouting to him to come to head-

quarters — that Cortez had news from Mexico, and that Alvarado was in danger; the city had risen. The next moment they two were hastening across the courtyard in the glare of the daylight; the tortured laughter of the blinded prisoner still rang in Estévan's ears — then and for many days after.

The news was such as to leave but one course open

The Entrance to the Castle of Chapultepec

to Cortez. Whatever the occasion of the uprising, Alvarado could not be left without succor. A little time was taken up in preparations, in the disposition of the wounded, in ordering the care of the fleet which Narvaez had brought, and in general preparations for the march. Then a small party started out for Vera Cruz, and the main body forded the River of Canoes and began the march for Tenochtitlan.

From day to day they met runners, both Tlascalans, who had escaped with word from Alvarado himself, and Aztecs, who came with false reports to confuse the infor-

mation. The chief facts of the case were soon stated. There had been a murmur of uprising, and Alvarado, urged on the one hand by a nervous desire to hold firmly the city which had been intrusted to him, and on the other by his contempt for the Aztec spirit, had decided to strike before the plot against him could come to a head.

Into the midst of the festival of Tezcatlipoca, where thousands of the people were gathered in the grounds of the *teocallis*, singing and feasting, he had led his iron phalanx. There had been a terrible harvest of death, and the gods had looked down on the unsanctified offering of hundreds — nobles and chiefs of clans, as well as warriors — upon the mysterious altar of the white man's gods. War it could not be called — it was a masssacre. But the contempt of Don Pedro Alvarado for the courage of the Aztecs took a sudden shift after it, for the angry thousands set upon him and drove him and his men back to their *tecpan* in a veritable whirlwind of barbaric wrath.

Outside the walls of the great house the city roared like a storm-beaten sea. From the roofs they saw the smoke of fires along the shore, where the brigantines Cortez had built during the winter were blazing. The night threatened to end all their dreams of conquest, and the *tecpan* seemed likely to be their tomb. Alvarado, driven to extremity, brought out Montezuma, and menacing him with a sword, bade him go out on the walls and quiet his people. This desperate step saved them for the time, but all through the night there was a silent and ominous rain of arrows, keen heralds of the city's hate, falling through the gloom upon the walls and in the great courtyard of the *tecpan*.

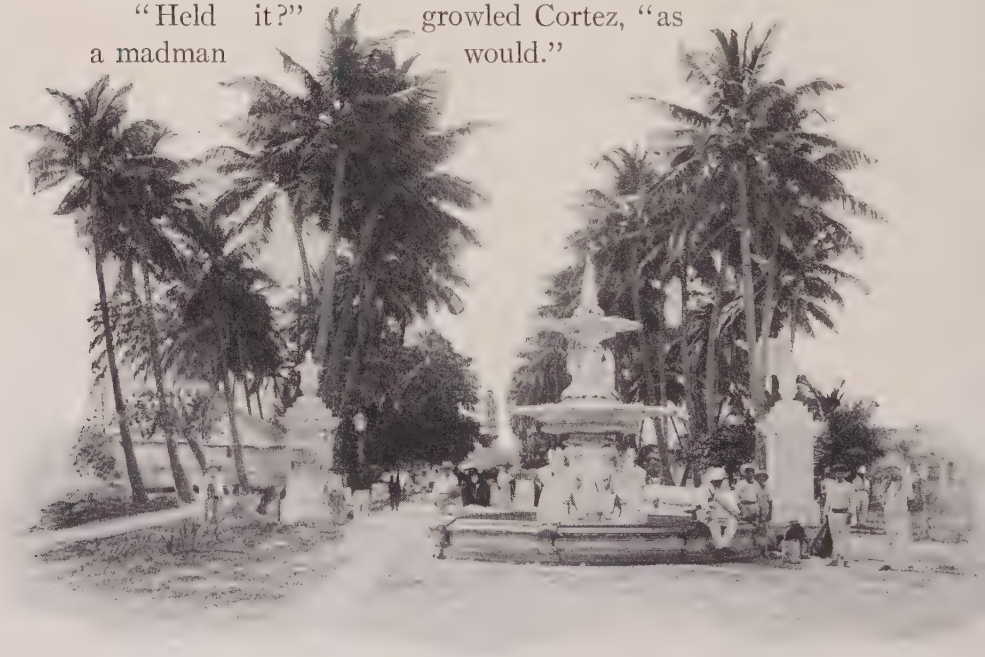
It was the deadly precision of these arrows which in the end preserved the garrison. Early the morning after the massacre in the temple, the water-supply gave out. The Aztecs had cut off one of the aqueducts, and that whole

quarter of the city was left without relief from thirst. There was grain in plenty, and Alvarado had foreseen in the night the move which must come next, and had drawn full every available receptacle. But the chance of suffering from thirst was evident and the men quailed at it. The arrows, however, gave them a clew, since they seemed to focus with significant intent upon a spot in the courtyard. This spot, when the armored officers went out to look at it, promised something, and the Spaniards eagerly dug into it with axes, and found the boon which their besiegers strove vainly and blindly to protect — a spring of fresh water.

June 24 Cortez arrived at the causeways, and finding to his surprise that the bridges were still in place, he marched in through the sullen and apparently deserted streets, and led his new forces into the old *tecpan*, where he and Alvarado met again, and Cortez told his rash lieutenant, in words of passionate reprimand, what he thought of the manner in which the city had been guarded.

"Whatever you may say of it," Alvarado protested, "we have not given it up. We have held it."

"Held it?" growled Cortez, "as a madman would."



The Alameda of Vera Cruz

CHAPTER XXII

THE WAR-GOD'S BEAK

THE blunder Alvarado had made was patent to all; the blunder with which Cortez followed it was one which could not have been foreseen or avoided, perhaps, without a deeper knowledge of the Aztec peoples than any of the Spaniards possessed. Back of both, there remained the first error — the placing of Alvarado in command.

The streets after Cortez returned were deserted. No corn, no aloes, no turkey-fowls came in at the *tecpan* gateway. The markets were closed. The commerce of the city slept. The supplies, which had been ample for Alvarado's garrison, being now subjected to the hunger of the returning troup and a thousand men from Narvaez's command, melted swiftly away. Cortez sent for Montezuma, and bade him open the markets. The King protested that they had been closed by the great Council, and that he could not open them by a common messenger. Cortez brought out Cuitlahuatzin, blinking from his long captivity, and ordered him to carry the King's word that the markets be opened.

Cuitlahuatzin, in his durance, had not been wholly dormant. He came out from his prison with a plan and a resolution.

"This that you ask is beyond my authority," he protested. "There must be a sign to the Council."

"The King shall give you authority," said Cortez, curtly.

Montezuma hesitated, then slipped a bracelet from his arm. The prospective ambassador shook his head,

and spoke in a low tone to his brother. The King gazed for a moment into Cuitlahuatzin's face; he put up his hands, slowly, took from his head the plumed helmet with the golden humming-bird, and gave it over as a token to the Council.

Cortez observed this with a vague feeling of dread. The gorgeous helmet had, he knew, some ceremonial meaning, and the somber eyes of the ruler who had bestowed it had in them a melancholy more deep than any word could express. "It must be a

The Sagrario, City of Mexico

weighty matter, that he sends this gear," Cortez thought. It was more than that, if he had but known, and the man who bore the feathered thing out of the *tecpan*, by craft, carried with him the Crown and sacred Kingship of Montezuma; The Child of the Sun had, in truth, deposed himself, and in sending the beak of Huitzil' back to the Council he abdicated his empire.

What followed in the Council of the Confederacy no one of the visitors ever knew. Guatomotzin spoke, and the Council agreed. The beak of the war-god was placed on the head of Cuitlahuatzin, and all through the night the silent, desperate mustering of the Aztec forces went on.

This was the great error — the freeing of Montezuma's brother, the man next in the succession for the imperial election, and sending him out with the Crown in his hands, having only to offer it back to the Council. Surely, Marina slept, and the lesson of Cempoala had been forgotten.

Morning dawned with growing sound of menace, like smothered thunder, in the air. Long before sunrise the sentries on the *tecpan* roofs beheld the great pyramid of Huitzil' black with warriors, and the sliding flights of arrows began to steal in over the walls and through the embrasures. Alvarado had learned that his theory of Aztec cowardice was untenable. That day Cortez learned it, too, and more — that he was now to be driven to defend his house against a nation in anger.

The attack began with much beating of war-drums and singing, war cries that sounded from the *teocallis*, one pyramid after another taking up the note of defiance. All this noise and bluster amused Cortez at first, but he watched the gathering moodily as he observed how great the odds against him really were. Never, in all his fighting, had he beheld such a multitude under arms. He was devoutly thankful that he had brought in the reinforcements, though the men

he had persuaded from Narvaez eyed him sourly. They had come in to take possession of a rich and wholly conquered city; they had followed Cortez in the belief that they had only to assist in carrying home the gold; and here, without warning, they found themselves in the midst of a siege, surrounded by hostile armies, in a city of cannibals with only narrow causeways leading out, the streets filled with clamor and the air with missiles. Small wonder they looked askance at their commander, — but it was too late for complaining. Their die was cast.

The continual rain of stones, javelins, and arrows did little damage, in the sense of actual injury to the garrison. No one was killed by it, nor were any serious wounds inflicted. Perhaps Cuitlahuatzin never expected anything serious from this part of his battle. But the inexhaustible stock of weapons and of arms to wield them could not but tell on the nerves of the defenders. The sheer number of missiles, after an hour or two, carried with it an awful suggestion of the force without the walls, and the degree of the enemy's preparation. Toward noon, other tactics came into play. The Indians began operations calculated to undermine the towers, and began tunneling, under breastworks of unbaked bricks which had been brought forward in the night.

This gave the besieged a chance for active defense, and the cannon made short work of the scheme. It was evident, however, that from that time forward there must be a constant lookout to prevent a similar line of attack. Once the cannonade began, Cortez felt some relief, since the carnage he achieved by this means was as plain to himself as to the enemy. The pyramid of Huitzil', within easy range, black and thunderous with the shouting foe, was his next target, but the evident waste of powder in mere killing soon caused him to desist from this diversion.

Then, too, the guns along the wall were no sooner turned toward the pyramid than one or another of the gates would be assailed by throngs of warriors who came crowding out of some narrow alley or impasse, suddenly and mysteriously as if by magic, driving with great beams and the trunks of trees against the barricades.

THE AZTEC CALENDAR STONE

In an affair of this sort, the Tlascalans were of little value, since they could not coöperate with the Spaniards, and their own methods of defense would not have held the *tecpan* against such assaults for an hour. The new troops, too, were not as efficient as Cortez might have desired, since they did not know the city, nor, in fact, were they acquainted with the mazes of the *tecpan* itself.

Late in the afternoon still another method of attack developed, and this gave the Spaniards even greater inconvenience. To Estévan and Bernal, holding their watch in the great system of chambers along the eastern wall, this threatening onset came as the most dangerous work of the day. The loopholes had been entered by arrows and javelins, now and then, all day; but now they began to send in missiles wrapped in burning cotton, which struck here and there in the woodwork, and which blazed long enough to set fire to the beamed ceilings wherever they were not promptly extinguished. This tactic, combined with the storming of the gateways and towers, harassed the Spaniards to such an extent that Cortez thought it necessary to undertake a sortie of some kind; this plan, however, he gave up in favor of another which Alvarado suggested, and which seemed far safer and more likely to prove effective. This was to send Montezuma out upon the walls and command his people to depart — an expedient so simple that Cortez wondered it had not been thought of sooner. "Why endure this harrying," he said jauntily, "when we have their King here amongst us? Take him out, Pedro, and bid him send away his dogs."

Alvarado lost no time in carrying out his instructions. He took the unhappy monarch to the great tower at the corner facing the pyramid of Huitzil', and bade him speak to his people. There was a hush, for the moment, in the thronged area below, when the King came forward; then a

murmur of wrath, which subsided as Montezuma held up his hand for silence. He spoke a few words, and his voice seemed to fail him. The wind tossed his long black hair, and the sight of him, their commander and high priest in the past, with his locks flying about his head, discrowned, despoiled of the golden beak of the god, seemed to awake a blind fury in the crowd below. The murmuring began again, and swelled till the temples echoed with the fire and wrath of it. Below, in the area, a chief threw up his hand, and loosed a handful of dust, derisively, to blow into the eyes of the people.

THE DEATH OF MONTEZUMA

It was too clamorous a moment for any spoken word to be distinguished, but this action carried with it both a taunt and an order. The crowd seemed to understand by it that Montezuma was trying to blind them with dust, and they raged at it. Another warrior flung up his hand, and hurled a stone at the dethroned prince. Alvarado was within a step of his prisoner, but before he could cover the distance a cloud of stones and lances enveloped the tower. When the buckler of the Spaniard was interposed it was already too late. The man who had been King, struck in a dozen places, tottered and fell.

They carried him back to his chamber, moaning and bleeding, and Alvarado reported to his commander another

mistake. The situation, he now admitted, was deeper than his knowledge of his strategy.

Montezuma lived a week after the terrible humiliation on the wall. It may have been the wounds which hastened his death, but there was in his soul a deeper scar than any of those from which, in his wretchedness, he tore the bandages. He had been lord of the land; his word had been its highest law, and his favor its supremest grace; he had ruled in barbaric pomp, and his subjects had loved him for it; and now, behold, he had given up his sovereignty, and they stoned him as a traitor. It had been the will of the gods. But now that the blow had fallen, now that his kingly spirit was utterly crushed, what could he ask of his life? Only that it leave him swiftly, that the days of his agony and shame might be few. In his chamber he lay and waited. Food was brought to him, but he refused it; water, and he would not drink; his wounds were cared for, and he ripped off the wrappings, and waited for the sluggish life to ebb away.

In that week, the investment of the *tecpan* never loosed its hold. Each day brought more fighting, more bloodshed. The Aztecs died by hundreds, and the living seemed to care nothing for their loss. For with the hundreds who died outside their walls, there were always a few within; the white men, too, proved their mortality. Sleep there was none, save as men might take it under arms, and in constant peril of fire and the spears of the enemy.

The day after Montezuma's fall, Cortez led a sortie with 200 picked men, intended as a test of the ability of the Spaniards to fight their way through the densely massed streets, and partly for the purpose of securing supplies from the nearest *tecpan* across the canal. They were caught before they had gone hardly 200 yards, stopped short by the solid wedging of the warriors in the narrow street,

The Cathedral of the City of Mexico

and prevented from returning when an order to retreat was given by lack of the bridge, which the Indians had destroyed. The return to the *tecpan* was slow, and the courage it required grim and unfaltering. The bridge was gone. But its place was shortly filled with beams from the houses, bricks torn from the walls, stones which had been hurled down from the house-tops, and — more efficaciously — by the bodies of the slain; over this terrible dam the Spaniards forced their horses to make their way, back to the slippery pavement, and so into the courtyard.

The sortie was a failure, and Cortez nursed a wound, slashing diagonally across the back of his left hand, which gave him ceaseless pain and prevented his grasping either the reins or the bar of his buckler.

There was another loss, too, which touched him deeply. Three of his men did not return, and yet no one had seen them die. Three of his comrades were in the hands of the enemy, and for several days he did not learn what had befallen them. When the news did come it was from the drums of the temple of Huitzil'. In the brilliancy of the sunlight, the sentries witnessed the gathering of the throng on the temple steps; heard the warning of the drums, and when Cortez had made his way to the wall, saw the captives dragged screaming to the fatal rock of sacrifice. The sight aroused Cortez, and in fact all the defenders, to fanatic rage.

"This they dare," he exclaimed, "to sacrifice Christian men to their accursed idols! *Madre Dios* — I will not have it so!"

A long-drawn wail, as the terrible drums fell silent, answered him from the distant pyramid.

"Who will follow me," Cortez demanded, "to burn yon temple? For though we die in the flames of it, the thing must fall to-day. Who will follow?"

The call for volunteers brought out a staunch troop — 400 men who feared nothing on earth, and who were tense with unspeakable anger. Cortez had a buckler lashed to his wounded arm. They took five cannon, and ordered that the others on the walls be directed against the pyramid, to clear it if possible, and to create a diversion while the storming party went forth. But the pyramid, owing to the peculiar lay of the city, overlooked the court-yard of the *tecpan*, the walls on that side being the lowest, so the mustering of the troop was plainly visible to the foe.

But in this charge there was a spirit, a fire, that the Aztecs had not seen. Straight through the serried ranks the band forced its crimson way, into the area of the *teocalli*, and up to the first landing of the stairs of Huitzil'. Here they were stopped for a time by the rush of men and spears from above, and by the necessity of dividing the force to guard the horses. When Cortez gave the word to mount, and the cannonade from the *tecpan* ceased, lest the fire injure friends, the struggle hung for a moment in the balance. Then Alvarado, stronger and more ruthless than any of his friends, broke through the press, hurling the defenders, still grasping their weapons, behind him, and gained the next platform, four white men at his back. The others followed, pausing only to despatch the luckless Mexicans who had served as stepping-stones to his indomitable advance.

No one remembered how they gained the top of the pyramid, but it must have been done by almost incredible efforts. Certain it was that they did reach the summit, and that they gathered there, some laughing, their breath coming too short to speak, and some sobbing in the extremity of labor and wrath. Some there were, too, that prayed, letting the arrows from below fall about them as they would. A hundred willing hands grasped the fatal

stone, the dripping rounded altar, and rolled it down into the throng below, shouting and singing as the hateful thing leapt from one landing to another. Cries of shame and grief went up from the defeated crowd, and Cortez could see the priests running to and fro, maddened at the sacrilege.

But this was not all. The carven images of wood with the blood-smeared lips, one by one they hacked down.

THE SACRIFICIAL STONE OF THE AZTECS

and on the roof of the temple they made a great fire, which crackled and roared and brightened as the night came on. Then the soldiers took great brands and billets and cast them down the stairways, till the interior took fire, and the pyramid smoked and flamed like a living volcano. The roof of clay began to crack open, and the stairways within seethed like craters. Then the Spaniards knew that the work was done, and that the temple of Huitzil' would trouble them no more. An hour of hot fighting and the band regained the *tecpan*.

That night Montezuma died. Cortez called for a truce, and delivered to the warriors of Cuitlahuatzin his ultimatum from the walls of his fortress. Marina, still buoyant and

comely, stood beside her lord, and translated his imperious words daringly, though she knew as well as he how black was the prospect of the night.

"If you do not immediately submit," said Cortez, "I will lay your city in ashes. I will sweep away your temples. There shall not be one of your race to remember how terrible is my vengeance."

Guatemotzin replied from the street.

"Malinche boasts. The bridges are broken down. Your men and beasts must hunger and die, for you can not escape. If we give a thousand lives for one, we shall still destroy you. There shall be no truce while any man of you still lives. I, Guatomotzin, war-chief in Tenochtitlan, have spoken."

The Church of Los Remedios on the Summit of the Aztec Pyramid

CHAPTER XXIII

LA NOCHE TRISTE

AT midnight, Cortez gave the order for the evacuation. Everything was as nearly in readiness as they could have hoped to make it. Knowing that the bridges had been destroyed, Estévan had overseen the construction of a pontoon of beams, torn from the ceiling of the chambers, laid upon rollers, and dragged out with horses.

Aside from this he and Sandoval had built some moving towers, about the height of the common houses along the streets, with portholes for light cannon and muskets, and gang-planks to be let down to allow of attacks at the level of the roofs. These engines had the merit of surprise, and when they first went into action, they served a good purpose in helping the van to clear the roofs. But in the end they perhaps lost more lives than they preserved.

The evacuation of the *tecpan* was silently made, under cover of the darkness and a threatening sky. As his men started out with their pontoon and the wooden towers, Estévan noticed the screaming of the birds in the great woven aviaries, breaking the stillness with unwonted outcry, — presage of a heavy storm; heat-lightning played constantly along the horizon, and there was a foreboding hush in the air; on the whole, it was a well-chosen time for the attempt to escape from the city. They came to the canal where the first bridge was missing, and laid their pontoon before any sign of discovery reached them.

The bridge was no sooner in place, however, than they found that they must fight their way across it. As suddenly as a flash of lightning blazed, filling the night with

quivering fire, they found themselves cast from still marching into pitched battle. The canal was filled with canoes, and the bridge was contested, inch by inch, as stubbornly as the steps of the great temple had been.

The darkness was both a help and a hindrance; a help, in that it concealed from the Mexicans the groups of non-combatants, wounded, women, and carriers, who were

CORTEZ IN THE STREETS OF MEXICO-TENOCHTITLAN

placed at intervals in the line of march; a hindrance, in that the gloom made little of the difference in weapons. It was all close work, and the cannon were for the most part useless. The towers did effective service for a while, especially in clearing the roofs, during the brief time when the moon shone clear in the rifts between the flying clouds. But this time was soon over. Impenetrable darkness settled over them, and the towers, no longer carefully guided, fell awry, and could not be dislodged. After this, they served only as impediments till the army was past

them, and then the Aztecs set fire to them, to light the rear of the foe to the keen eyes of their archers.

Cortez, taking the hint, began firing the houses, and this cleared the way for a little, since the burning buildings gave no standing room to the Indians. The pontoon, when the army had passed, had to be abandoned, since it was wedged so hard between the banks that Estévan and his men could not dislodge it. It had served its turn, however, and had carried over the first great canal the entire force, 1200 Spaniards, 6000 Tlascalan allies, the cannon, and eighty horses. If more similar structures had been prepared, the tale of the night might have read otherwise.

Before the great causeway was reached, there had been heavy losses, and the retreat had become in a measure disorganized. Every step, since the opening of the battle, had been resisted. The Mexicans had evidently watched the movement from the first, and had withheld their attack with good strategy, until the whole force was clear of the *tecpan*. Then, when it was too late to withdraw, they posted their multitudes to make sure work of the end. The oath had been registered in the temple of Tezcatlipoca, that the hated invaders should perish, every man of them. Now, in the night and the tempest, the nation gathered to fulfill its vow.

The storm broke as the van reached the causeway.

The lake whitened under the lash of the wind with the lurid phosphorescence of the water smitten by the rain. Then it fell dark again, being covered with war-canoes as far as the eye, in the flashing visions of the lightning, could pierce the grey of the sluicing floods. The first bridge was gone, and they filled its place, deep as the water was, with dead bodies, sunken canoes, and materials torn from the nearest houses. Into the gap, too, went some stout Spanish armor, carrying down shouting men in its dreadful fall, and six of Cortez's cannon. Ahead of them stretched the long

straight horror of the causeway, and they bent to it, treading the grisly pavement where the bridge had been, and staggering under a fire of arrows as steady and as closely falling as the rain itself.

Toward this night all the councils in the *teocallis* had been directed. For this attack the priests of Huitzil' had prayed, and had torn out palpitating hearts in sacrifice, and had framed their mystic prophecies. For this Guatomotzin had called in the subjects of the empire from its uttermost bounds, and the levies had come in by thousands, many of them bearing their canoes with them, for it was known long before that the last battle would be on the dykes, and that the forces of Tenochtitlan must fight from the lake. For this Cuitlahuatzin had gone out of the *tecpan* of the Spaniards with the Golden Beak, and the Council had decreed that Montezuma the King was as one dead, and that his brother should be Emperor and high priest of Mexico. For Cortez, all the victories and strategies and promises led alike to this stormy hazard, this gantlet between the javelins and the deep. The splendid dream of empire dissolved, and the dreamer woke to save his tattered legions, as best he could, from the terrible, mysterious, beautiful city. But now on the causeway, there was no time to think of what had befallen them. Each step must be earned, each gain must be bought with sword-strokes. One bridge-gap had been filled. Two more yawned darkly between the army and the pavements of Tlacopan.

To Estévan, fighting in the desperately harried rear-guard, the chance seemed utterly hopeless. Cortez, in the van, could take courage from good strokes, and note with a stout heart the slow but steady progress of his march. But in the rear, where the canoes pressed thickest, and where the enemy leapt ashore and bore in by hundreds, always fresh and fearless, and hopeful, too, of making

Mount Popocatepetl

prisoners, it all looked like the desperate struggle of a beast in a fatal trap. Estévan knew that progress was being made, for he saw that those in front moved on, and that his troop also moved. But it was all so slow, and the losses along the column were so evident, that he believed the head of the column was at a standstill, and that the movement of the rear was merely the natural closing up to take the places of those who fell.

Then there came a real stopping of the whole line, and the word was passed back that they had reached the gap where the bridge had been, and that timbers were needed.

Timbers needed! As well might Cortez have asked for a charm to still the tempest. So the word went back, that the rear was harassed to the verge of panic, and that there were no timbers. The stones of the causeway must be used. Into the breach went the cannon. A dozen horses, slain at intervals along the column, were dragged up to the edge, and cast in to fill the gap. Canoes, grappled here and there, were swung up and hurried forward, that their light frames might add to the slowly rising foundations.

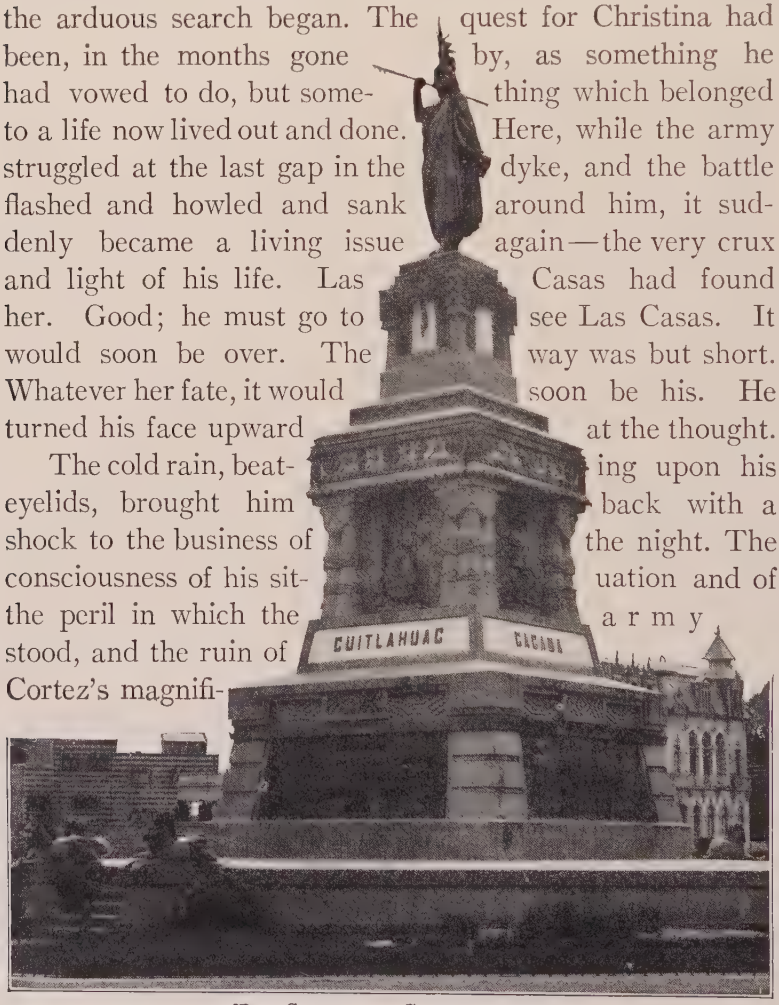
After this wait, the column moved forward again, and the rear-guard paused on the farther side of the improvised bridge, taking advantage of the steep slope to hold the enemy for a moment, and to rest there, where a slight relief from the fatigue of continual hacking and thrusting was afforded by the higher level.

Then on through the chill, driving rain, with the arrows rattling on their morions, till the pause of the last bridge came; that was near dawn, and when the word came back, it had not far to be borne. The rear-guard had moved farther than the van, and between the two the causeway had taken its toll of death.

When the last pause came, Estévan, veteran that he was, had ceased to watch or to hope. He was fighting still,

for the multitude of the assailants seemed undiminished, and the fury of the attack had not cooled. The trained muscles still responded, the eye was still sure, but the spirit of the man was ranging along the dyke, and beyond. Back went his vision, over the *Tierra Caliente*, to the mad, hate-winged words of Narvaez in the temple at Cempoala; farther still, to the house he had left, so long before, when the arduous search began. The quest for Christina had been, in the months gone by, as something he had vowed to do, but something which belonged to a life now lived out and done. Here, while the army struggled at the last gap in the dyke, and the battle flashed and howled and sank around him, it suddenly became a living issue again—the very crux and light of his life. Las Casas had found her. Good; he must go to see Las Casas. It would soon be over. The way was but short. Whatever her fate, it would soon be his. He turned his face upward at the thought.

The cold rain, beating upon his eyelids, brought him back with a shock to the business of the night. The consciousness of his situation and of the peril in which the army stood, and the ruin of Cortez's magnifi-



The Statue of Cuitlahautzin

cent conquest, all came back to him in a bitter wave. A javelin, sliding across his brow, struck off his helmet, and for the moment he stood bareheaded, blinking and rubbing the rain from his face. Sandoval, fighting beside him, picked up the helmet and gave it back, saying hoarsely, "I thought you were hit."

"No; not yet, I thank you." In the moment they both noticed that they could now see each other clearly, and that the night was filling with the cold pallor of the day.

Ahead there was a movement, and they could see a fire, where the advance had reached the shore, and the Spaniards were driving the foe from the low houses along the shore. Even as they looked, the canoes on the lake seemed to focus at a given point, and the rush of the Aztecs against the Tlascalan division began. So utterly did the natives concentrate upon this one point, that the rear-guard was left for the time out of the battle, and they could only watch the desperate effort to break the lines. Then a cry came back along the dyke, fluttering from one troop to another.

The Tzin Guatomo, striking in upon the Tlascalans, had broken through, and the army was divided. Sandoval and Estévan watched with horror, knowing that, for the time at least, they could do nothing, and that the worst of the fighting might be still to come. Then they saw, through the smoke of the burning huts, a troop of men in mail coming back, and they knew that Cortez had turned, weary as he was, and was coming to their rescue.

Before that little iron-clad phalanx Guatomotzin struggled sharply, resisting for a moment, while he could, and then with a rush of canoes and a great splashing of swimmers, he gave up the attempt. In a final flight of arrows the army took up its way, and passed on, through the main streets of Tlacopan, to the steaming hillside beyond, where the men flung themselves down and took breath, dripping,

CUITLAHUATZIN IN PRISON (*From the base of the statue*)

spent, broken with stress and fatigue, and bleeding from countless wounds; there the sun shone out.

When Estévan and Sandoval came up the hill, they found Cortez seated on a rock, his sword on the ground beside him, his helmet at his feet, and his face in his hands.

He did not mark their presence. Only from time to time he clenched his fists, and his heavy frame shook. His glance swept the hillside, and they heard him sobbing, openly, as a man who had lost the world and all, and cares no more who may behold the agony of his despair.

THE TORTURE OF CUITLAHUATZIN (*From the base of the statue*)

CHAPTER XXIV

HUSBAND AND WIFE

IN a little room in a low white house on a hill near Havana, stood a woman, waiting, her eyes closed, her hand pressed tight against her heart. There were steps on the stone floor without, steps whose sound she knew, but which she had feared she might never know again. A man, his face lined and grey, but his eyes alight with a terrible, searching eagerness, pushed open the door of the room. He did so slowly, timorously, as though he were afraid to see what the room held.

He raised his eyes to the still figure in the corner. For just one instant a trembling seized his limbs; then, with a great cry, he rushed forward and took the woman in his arms. "Christina!" he cried. "Christina!"

"My husband!" Her answering whisper was so low that he barely heard it, though the pale lips were close to his ear. For a long moment they stood thus, Christina's eyes still closed. At last, in answer to his pleading whisper, the white lids lifted, and his wife's eyes looked into his. There were no words to break in upon the solemn rapture of that moment. Time, which had done them so great a despite, could not reach or harm them now.

Hand in hand, like two children, they sat, then. They did not talk, at the first, save in some few low words. They were not glad, not sorry; they were too near the secret of life to be other than grave. Together and alone they had looked on the bitter face of death, and they could still feel his shadow falling over their shoulders. But they were together — at last; and what mattered it?

How long they would have sat thus, silent, they could not have told you; but after a little time, there came quick, light steps on the corridor-floor outside, and a little boy, of perhaps a dozen years, came into the room. It was Christopher, Hernando's son. Hernando took him to his heart, and the boy stayed with them for a little, eying his father with a curious, wide gaze. When he was gone, it was as though something of the soberness of their mood had passed, and presently husband and wife fell to talking of the year that had been since their clinging hands had touched.

Christina first, without questioning, told of the trick that lured her away, and of the things which had come thereof. How she had gone with Orelva, undoubting, to nurse her husband through the lingering illness of the fever which Orelva said was bringing death by inches; how they had reached a settlement on one of the islands, and Orelva had thrown off the mask; how the stern constancy of her soul, and the fire of her recriminations had in the end shaken the man's will — for there had always been more of cunning than of force about him,— how she had left him, unconstrained, to take refuge with the Dominican sisterhood just then establishing itself on the island. There followed a long period of waiting, and fruitless efforts to report her whereabouts to her friends in Santiago; then, at last, by chance, she had come to meet Las Casas. He, though now deeper than ever in the problem he had set himself, for the freedom and safety of the natives, was more occupied and unsparing of himself than ever; but he found time to bring her back with him on one of his journeys, to Cuba; and there she had waited.

"Didst thou not know I would come at last?" asked Hernando, at the close.

"I knew thou wouldst if thou wert in this world," she answered simply.

The Tree of Montezuma

"But tell me now of thee, and thy searching! For thou didst search?"

"I never faced a dawn that I did not look for thee. Listen, and I will tell it all, from the beginning."

Tell it he did, from the day when he found the house sealed and empty, down to this day that brought them once more together. Of the death of Orelva and how he thought Christina dead, too, and yet could not believe it, and of Las Casas's message, and the great days that followed. He told her of the ending of the great battle by the lake; how Cortez followed up his victory; how another later battle, Otumba, was fought, planned to crush the natives absolutely, but which eventuated rather in the reëstablishment of Cortez's supremacy, and the disorganization of the powers against him. It was all over now, Estévan said, all but the slow closing of the coil, by the sure and certain method of Vasco Nuñez; Mexico was subdued, and, save for the secret, high places of the shrines where the white men could not penetrate, no real resistance dared to raise its head. Though the work of Cortez would never be done, the greatest hours of it were over; Cortez could be trusted for the rest.

"But from the moment when I knew that thou wert living, my love and my lover, the time, even that great time, dragged bitterly. I felt as though I must come to thee, and yet I knew I could not come till our great meat was ready for the flames. I am here on Cortez's leave now, and must return to him!" Christina shivered and clutched him by the arm.

"No!" she whispered. "After we have found each other again, no!"

Hernando soothed her, and after a little the talk fell on happier things. It was by this time twilight; and soon they sat down to the evening meal, at which the two children

were also allowed to sit, in honor of the return of the head of the house. Little Vasca, to Hernando's eyes, still showed that haunting likeness to the man who died at Acla. He looked at her often, a deep regret and thoughtfulness in his eyes.

Where the Pagan Altar once Stood

"What is it, my dear?" asked Christina, noting his expression.

"Vain things," he answered. "Only — had the master I follow now been as great as his teacher, the temples of the Aztecs would still stand!"

Later in the evening, when the children had gone to their beds, Hernando and Christina sat together once more. The year of the shadow was passed; it and all its things were as a tale told and done with; for they two, from the beginning, had been ready for their tasks and their burdens; the spirit of the pioneer was in both alike, and tears were not to be wasted — save as tears of

joy may flow more freely than the will directs. Together — that was the end of it.

Looking into each other's faces in the candlelight, they made a discovery that evening — a cheerless, disquieting discovery — and one well blest if it be made in a time of gladness, that it may pass unmourned; the discovery that they were no longer young.

A few days of cautious inquiry into the state of his properties in Cuba made the necessity for his continuance in the service of Cortez more than ever apparent. The plantations which had been ceded to him were, of course, uncultivated, and to obtain any profit from them it would be necessary to prove his right anew — a step which Cortez had expressly advised against. In fact, to make Cuba a fair abiding-place, the island needed a new governor.

"I have been prudent," said Christina, "but what would you? There 's nothing to be done with our lands here, and the governor will never permit you to lease them. Besides, we have the boy to think about."

"I see," Estévan replied, "that Velásquez has little use for me, and that Cortez needs me greatly. Very well, then — Cortez I will serve. As for the boy —"

"I know," Christina broke in. "He must go to Spain. He must be schooled. Already he grows too curious for me. But is there never to be rest, Hernando? Never a peaceful year, and an end to the wandering, and a home for us?"

He turned away a moment. Surely, she had been patient, and faithful — she had given him to follow his own dreams, and she had waited. Now it was her right to ask. In his own heart, too, there was a call to quieter days. He took her hands in his, and looked long into her eyes.

"Next year, dearest," he said gravely, "next year."

With that they turned to the planning of the intermediate

steps. Christina was to take little Christopher to Spain, Vasca was to be left, for the year, at least, with the sisters of a convent at Santiago, and Hernando was to go on with his commission. Whatever might befall them in the waiting time, Cortez should have his men and horses — that was the duty which faced him. No delay occurred, for the chance soon offered of a sailing to Spain in a ship which was to stop at Santo Domingo, and they took advantage of the movement, thankful for even so much opportunity to be together.

Thus the moment of parting was put off, though Christina shed tears at leaving little Vasca. The child, with a curious insistence, begged to be taken with them, even when she knew the necessity under which she was being left, and the fact that her peace and welfare were provided for.

"I know you will come for me again," she repeated, over and over; "but I wish to go with you. With the sisters, I shall dream at night, and I shall be afraid, and Christopher will not love me any more when he comes back. I wish to go."

"This is foolish talk," Christopher maintained stoutly. "I am a Spanish gentleman, and I will love my little maiden always."

With that the lad's usually facile speech suffered eclipse, and he clenched his fists and blinked his eyes, and straightway retired from the controversy. Vasca was the only one of the group who did not weep, and she stood looking straight before her, repeating to herself, absently, "I wish to go — I wish to go."

So, in the little portico of the convent, they left her with her visions.

To little Christopher, the voyage to Spain was an experience bordering closely on the marvelous. From his earliest years he had known only the shifting, temporary,

The House of Cortez in Coyoacan

violent life of the New World; had seen nothing but the feverish, beautiful desolation of the islands, and the careless towns which had been built by men who toiled at the building even while their eyes and hearts were away in the mines or on the road to Cathay. He was, at this time, a boy of eleven, well grown, active, and alert beyond his years. His earliest impressions were of the frontier in the South Seas — wonderful impressions, it is true, but all of them dimmed a little by another set of experiences, wholly vicarious, which in themselves constituted another world more real to him than that which he had seen with his own bright boyish eyes. This other world was the Spain of his mother's memory.

In the long intervals of Estévan's absence, when he and his mother had been together in the little house at Santiago, the fabric of old-world fancies had been in the loom. The mother, lonely and wistful, had dwelt long and tenderly on the beauties of Spain, on the glory of its heroes, the miracles of its architecture, the musical, glamorous tide of life and romance, the chivalry of the cities, the glow of gold and purple on the hillside vineyards — all etherealized and magnified by the light of her exile's imagination. Christopher had drunk in her dreams, and this voyage was to bring him close to the land of her desires. A day of magical exaltation, surely, was that when the *Gratia* sailed out of the harbor at San Domingo, and set her prow to the eastward.

Before the first week of the passage was over, he had found another and more immediate source of inspiration. The pilot, a cheery man who had sailed with Ojeda and Solis on their first voyages, took the lad captive, and instructed him delightedly in the mysteries of seamanship and navigation. More than this, he had told him tales almost as strange as his mother's, about the new world they

were leaving — tales in which the great Admiral, and the Pinzons, and the ill-starred Solis, and even the lad's own father, were heroes and masters of fate. Before they had reached the Azores, the boy was in a ferment of romantic fancies, torn between his loyalty to his mother's stories, and this new saga of the undiscovered West.

Christina, her own heart fluttering at the approach of land, was seized with fear lest she might have exaggerated the charms of Andalusia, and she took occasion, pathetically enough, to prepare the boy's mind for some trifling disappointments. It might prove, she warned him, that the cathedral was not so large as she had remembered it, or the mountains so high, or the songs in the moonlight so sweet, or the children so many and so gay; but of this last she was still reasonably certain, and she clung to it, for all through the lad's childhood, in the Islands, the lack of children of his own sort had been a cross to him. At all this the pilot shook his head and looked grave; he, too, had been young, and had gone back to Spain, and had found it changed, so that the lure of the sea had overborne his homeward vows.

Their landfall was off Cadiz, and they reckoned that the voyage had been a fortunate one, sailing so far by astrolabe and compass and dead-reckoning, to strike so near the mark. They lingered in the harbor there for a day, took on some fresh fruits and biscuit, and then coasted down to the mouth of the Guadalquivír. So the lad found his Spain just as his mother had said, and they clung to each-other in wonder and gladness, while the painted shore slipped by, and the towered towns came up from the horizon, gleamed against the blue of the shouldering hills, and sank again into the sea astern. The strangeness of the alien western world to Spanish eyes was here reversed, for Christopher Estévan, reared in the Indies, brought his fresh perceptions and his boyish heart back with him to a land more wonder-

ful than that which Columbus discovered, and he brought with him all the beautiful traditions of that land, as they had come to him through the pure heart and loving memory of his mother. If we could understand and record the impressions which must have come to him, born and reared as he had been, he could understand the Spain of his age, and the history of the time when Castile, war-hardened and war-weary, groped across the sea and laid hold upon an imperial domain, searching out its borders year by year, and drawing from it the energy for the final flowering of her splendor.

The House of Alvarado in Coyoacan

CHAPTER XXV

THE FAITH OF THE DISCONSOLATE HEART

IN Seville, where Christopher began his studies in the monastery school, Christina had many friends; but more than to any other of these she was drawn, during the first winter of their residence, to the daughter of Don Diego Barbosa. This gentleman was alcalde of the royal arsenal; he was of Portuguese birth, but had spent his life in the Spanish service, and his daughter Beatriz had married only the year before a Portuguese navigator, who soon after set out on his discoveries under the auspices of the King of Spain.

At first Christina had been attracted by the common condition in which they stood — each waiting for the return of a husband from the New World. As time went on, however, her interest in Beatriz grew into a deep and abiding affection. The girl was so beautiful, so patient, and withal so conscious of her dignity as a wife and a mother — her child was only a few months old when her husband sailed — that her hopes linked themselves irresistibly with those of the older woman. The man for whom she waited was he who is to be known through time as perhaps the greatest of maritime adventurers, Ferdinand Magellan.

The two women used often to pray together in the cathedral, and the burden of their prayers was always the same — for the safety of the absent, and for news. The Señor Barbosa, from sources he did not mention, had information which made Magellan's quest seem more dangerous than it otherwise appeared. He was sure, he confided to Christina, that the captains who had gone out with his son-in-

law were not all faithful to him. The plan of the expedition itself was a daring one: to discover a strait farther south than any one had sailed along the coast of the New World, reach the great South Sea, and so return from the Moluccas around the Cape of Good Hope.

A Church Door in Lima, Peru

The first word that came back to Beatriz was brought by one of the captains whom Don Diego had suspected. This man, Gomez by name, reported that Magellan was trading along the southern coast, and that he hoped to find the strait in the autumn, when the sea should be clear of ice. Besides this, he had numerous corroborative details about the outward voyage, to all of which Don Diego listened without conviction, though Beatriz drank them in eagerly enough. Magellan was still alive and well; good. It only remained to pray for an early autumn, that her lord might find the strait, and so come at the Islands of Spices.

As the summer went by she grew more anxious. Day by day her child, who had been a lusty babe, lost his strength.

"I fear me for Rodrigo," she said to Christina, a searching note of grief in her voice, "and for his father if he should come back and find me childless."

"It will pass," Christina assured her, longing to be of comfort. "It is merely that the child withers in the heat, like a flower."

The Portal of the Cathedral at Lima

"God grant that it be so," said Beatriz, gently, "but I have something within me that breaks when I think my husband may not return in time. For if he were to come, the child would recover, and all would be well with us."

The summer continued dry and hot. No news came from the inscrutable south. In September, the life of the fading flower went out, and the young mother, pale in her grief, and drooping in the long silence, took up her watch alone.

For a time after this Christina's resolution was shaken, and she regretted that she had yielded so easily to the circumstances which had separated her from Estévan. For the time, at least, she hated the New World and all its lures and sacrifices; this attitude naturally made itself felt

in her talk with Christopher, but he was too filled with the wonders of the new life he was leading to grasp the inference she desired to have him find in her words. Besides, there was, somewhere at the back of his young mind, the picture conjured up by the talk of the pilot on the voyage; the New World might be a cruel world; when the babe Rodrigo died, it had seemed so, at least, for he never questioned the mother's conviction that the absence of the father was to blame. But, even so, it was surely a land of glory.

Meanwhile, he was discovering new domains himself; the domains of history, of poetry, of music, and finally the magical realm to which the difficult key was to be won in the mastery of the Latin tongue; and a hard quest he found it, in spite of the silken encouragements, laced with birchings, which he had of his cowled instructors. Aside from the business of his schooling, he had certain exercises prescribed by his father and on no account to be neglected: exercises with the sword and buckler, with sword and dagger, with the lance, and in horsemanship, all conducted by a wizened old soldier with a wry neck, a patient man, with many scars and endless learning in matters of warfare.

"This part of the lad's training must on no account be neglected," Hernando had written from Mexico, "for I will not that he should grow up and be defenceless, and these are things better learned by boys while their minds are supple, than by grown men when the need is upon them."

On receiving this letter, Christina was moved to look into the matter of her son's progress in arms, personally, and she sought out his instructor, and dutifully inquired.

The old man-at-arms was gruff and taciturn at first, but willing to speak briefly.

"The boy," he said, "does well enough for one so young. He has no bones in him, and as yet little wind, but he sees well. His foot-work will serve — for the

present. His arm is tough, but his wrist will not do its work."

"How soon, think you, will he grow proficient?" she inquired.

The old man shook his head. "That were hard to answer. He is young enough, and well grown, If he be spared, and come into his manhood with a quarrelsome temper, so that he may practice often, he may get some skill before he is five-and-twenty. Now in my day — " With this the lecture began, and Christina's heart sank, for it was plain that if the lad's teacher spoke truly he would have to give all his life to the learning of some few thrusts and parries. However, she understood only here and there what he said, though Christopher seemed to gather both delight and encouragement from the technical harangue of the old fire-eater. The end of the interview, as it turned out, was more agreeable, for at the last the instructor melted a little, and let her see that, with all his professional manner, the old fellow loved his young disciple, and was pleased with his progress.

As the winter wore on, this affection was more openly expressed, and Christopher was allowed to accompany his master to witness all sorts of military exercises, musters, drills, tournaments, and even judicial combats, that he might learn with his own eyes the manners of war, and that his nerves might be steadied against the shock of bloodshed. All of which, being within the strict curriculum of his training, was welcome to the lad and grateful to his teacher, who always made these little trips at the expense of his pupil, though now and then the good fathers at the monastery school frowned upon the interruption.

In the early spring, while Christopher was on a visit for the day to his mother, a servant from Don Diego Barbosa came with a message, asking her to come at once, as

there was melancholy news from the sea, and the lady Beatriz was greatly cast down by it. For the next week, Christina remained with her friend. The tidings had been, as it seemed, the worst that could befall. Ferdinand Magellan was dead, and of his little fleet but one ship remained afloat, and that one was lost in a sea that no man had even

The Cathedral at Lima, Peru

sailed before. The word came by a Portuguese captain, returning by way of the Cape of Good Hope. In this, had they but paused to consider it, they might have read a record of achievement, but to the stricken household there was only one truth in the world, the black and desolate fact that the man they loved and awaited was dead. Wait never so long, they moaned, and it will be in vain. He may not come again. Hope lives not beyond this.

The hope being fled, the life of Beatriz could not stay to face the night alone. She had grown a little cheerful, in the spring, and had seemed to cast off her sorrow; and now, even as her soul seemed to gain its victory, this word came, and fluttering like a spent flame, she died.

Christina was cast into the deepest gloom by this tragic event, and even the lad felt, for the first time, something of a resentment against the strange, alluring world beyond the western horizons. In the summer these feelings on his part wore off somewhat, for he was merely a boy, and it is difficult to kill out the enticement of a ranging mystery from a boy's thoughts. Good news came from Hernando, too, but it only made his wife long the more ardently for the conclusion of his work, and the time when they might have done with wars and explorations, and take up the peace of home again. In his letters he described the final march upon Mexico-Tenochtitlan, the stubborn, bloody siege, and the capture of the ruined city. There was still much to be done, and the vast province was all to be organized and governed for the King, but the heavier warfare was over.

In September it happened that there was to be a great embarkation of troops from the harbor at the mouth of the Guadalquivír, and Christopher had permission of the prior and his mother to go with his master-in-arms to see it. There would be lessons to be learned from it, he knew, and it would be a brave sight in itself, and one to remind him of his father, and of the tales he had heard of Balboa, and Cortez, and Pedro Alvarado, and other men who were nearly as heroic, in his mind, as the Cid himself.

So he and his old comrade set off, gaily, and spent the day along the quays, and made subtle and profound criticisms on the handling of the troops and the mangement of the ships and barges. As the time of sunset approached, they sat down before a little fruit-seller's shop near the water-side, ate the food they had brought, and watched the lazy threading of traffic in the harbor; the tide had turned again, and the flood was coming in, bearing a few stray sails with it. Among these their eyes were caught by a bedraggled little caravel, of perhaps five-and-eighty tons

The Straits of Magellan

burden, which bore the house-flag of Castile, and seemed to have returned from some voyage in the service of the King. She was of light draft, and her hull evidently carried little cargo, so she drifted close up to the quay; a puff of breeze swinging her around, her stern came in view, and in battered letters which had once been proudly gilt, they read the name: *Victoria*.

The boy was up and away instantly, the old soldier striding along after him. They went down to the water's edge, and watched with thrilled impatience the preparations for the landing. The ship was scarred from stem to stern; her sails were rent and patched, and the green weed showed through the clear water along her sides. There could be no mistake — the name was still visible, and her every look confirmed the marvel of her return; for Christopher remembered well the names of Magellan's ships, and that among them there was a caravel which should be like this one — a craft with the name *Victoria*. The men on board her were as ragged as their ship. They let down a boat, and came ashore, and Christopher followed them to the shipping office, viewing these tattered wanderers with awe.

In an hour the port rang with the news. The Emperor's ambassador came down in person to see and talk with the captain, whose name was Del Cano, and every one of his nineteen hungry followers was made a hero on the instant. Three years they had been sailing, and fighting, and sailing again. They had passed through the steep straits to the South, and had come out upon the unknown sea — the sea that Vasco Nuñez had first beheld. They had crossed this unimaginable waste, come among the islands, and so met the Portuguese; and following their sea-track, they had rounded Africa and come into the Atlantic again. In all the navigations of history no prouder task had been breasted than this ragged caravel had accomplished; and the Em-

peror gave no more magnificent crest than that which he afterward granted to this Del Caño, who bought Magellan's message home — the belted globe with the triumphant legend — *Primus circumdedisti me* — Thou first encompassedst me. If only the child Rodrigo had lived — or the gentle Beatriz! And Magellan, too, slain upon the far coast of the Philippine Archipelago, which 400 years later was to be interwoven in the history of the Hemisphere Columbus had disclosed.

That night, returning to his mother, and sending his ancient to beg leave from the *padres*, Christopher could not rest for the wonder of it. In his dreams he heard, over and over again, the quaint debate of the captain with the ambassador in his robes — the puzzling over the dates; for Del Caño had come back, by his record, on September 6, and he found the folk of Seville recording the affairs of the day as September 7; whereat the ambassador had explained it learnedly. In the heart of him the spirit of his father awoke.

Christina wept over it all, because of the sweet soul who should have been alive to see that day, and because it was only too clear to her that a new spell had been set upon her son, and that he, too, would wander, in his day.

Sunset on the Mountains of Ecuador

CHAPTER XXVI

A MAN ARRIVES IN SPAIN

ON a certain dock in a seaport town of Spain, confusion reigned. Even in a place where ordinarily life's business was an hysterical and tumultuous one, an added excitement was in the air.

The master of the port, in gorgeous uniform, strode vociferously about, sweating under his official arms in the hot sunshine. The idlers of the water-front, hawkers of fruit and trinkets, seamen, girls, keepers of inns along the river, carriers and tatterdemalions of the lower town, and many lesser officials in arms, all were there, crowding around the growing pile of merchandise being landed from the newly arrived ship.

In the midst of the confusion stood the cause of it, his dark gaze bent scornfully over the seething throng, with a flicker of contempt in his eye. It was Francisco Pizarro: Pizarro, the knight of the long lean years, more gaunt and insolent than ever; he was backed by a handful of fellows as weatherbeaten as himself, and a couple of brown Indian lads, who looked out wonderingly on the grand reception which was being accorded to their master. Confronting Pizarro, and answering his hot-blooded arguments with coldly controlled legal phrases spoken in a thin, chirping voice, stood a pale little man whom Pizarro had long forgotten, yet who, perhaps, more than any other, had set the bold adventurer's heart against the law, — the Bachelor Enciso. The two wrangled bravely, and to no agreement; at length both appealed to the master of the port, who politically replied that nought could be done without the

alcalde, and that they must bide their peace until that worthy should arrive. To which they perforce assented, with equal lack of grace.

FRANCISCO DE PIZARRO (*From a contemporary print*)

In the crowd that had gathered round the two disputants, there was one young man who eyed the bold Pizarro with a peculiar, almost devout fervor. This was Christopher Estévan, to whom Pizarro's name had become one to conjure with. He had heard of him from his early boyhood, and now of late more than ever, through his father's letters from the Indies. When Christopher had heard the vague harbor-gossip of Pizarro's coming, he had thrilled at the bare hope of seeing this man. In this hope he lived, and his studies suffered, for he began to watch the shipping with a hawk's eye, that he

might not miss his hero when he came. . . . And now, here the man was, before him, and speaking so that all the dock might hear. Christopher edged closer through the crowd.

"You are interfering," Pizarro was saying to Enciso

THE GREAT ALTAR OF THE CATHEDRAL IN THE CITY OF MEXICO

with reckless scorn, "with the interests of the King, for there is no doubt that I serve him more richly than any man who ever came back from the Indies. It is your nature, old meddler. I mind me the time you took Balboa off Ojeda's ship, and Ojeda died for the lack of good men like Vasco Nuñez. I mind me when you found us in the Bay of Carthagena, and you would not let me go back, though my men were starving. We paid you well for that when we had you in Darien jail. But for Nuñez, the men would have made an end of you then — "

"It is only justice that I warn you," the bachelor cut in sharply, "since you are speaking before many witnesses, and what you say may cause you trouble. I cannot hear you myself, having grown deaf with years, and the action I bring is merely for just debt. But if you rave so, you may let out matters which will serve to hang you."

"I bid you both be still," said the port master, "until there comes an officer to take the case in hand."

Pizarro grumbled, and the bachelor watched him with keen, self-righteous eyes. The alcalde mayor came in person, there was more argument, and at the end of it the bachelor marched off triumphantly, and the others haled Pizarro along to the debtor's prison, there to await his trial. His Indians, his bales of stuff from Terra Firma, and the strange beasts he had brought with him were all left in charge of the master of the port, Pizarro ordering his own men, if they valued life, to see that no harm should come to them.

Before they marched him off, Christopher went up to him, and speaking humbly, as a lad before a hero from overseas should speak, even though the hero be on his way to prison, offered his services. He told whose son he was, and Pizarro looked kindly at him, and seemed pleased.

"Lad, can you read? Are you learned?" the hero

MARTIN LUTHER

asked, quickly, as if in some mistrust, yet with an idea that the accomplishment might be of service.

When Christopher had admitted his scholarly attainments, Pizarro came close to him, and spoke confidentially.

"In that case," he said, "I have a service for you. You shall write for me a letter to the King, and you shall see that these lawyers cozen me no more than is needful. Go with me."

There the lad's secretaryship began, and in the course of it he came to know his hero so well that the seamy side of his heroism came to be more apparent than the gilded one; but at the outset, while the man was persecuted and imprisoned, Christopher's worship was without bounds. After all, this is part of youth.

When Pizarro's case came up before the alcalde, shortly after the arrest, Christopher had sent numerous letters from his chief to prominent persons at court at Toledo, and finally, on the very day of the trial, he was made the caretaker of a letter which might have saved all the trouble had it been shown in the first place — a letter from Governor Los Rios, commending Pizarro to the court and to the admiralty as a man with new and important discoveries to propose. Christopher read it in perplexity.

"But why," he said, "did not you show them this before?"

"Because," Pizarro returned craftily, "I had not read it; and I did not know what might be in it!" — another way of intimating that a man without knowledge of letters must be cautious, and is likely to be suspicious, when his whole life has been at odds with the learned authorities.

The letter from Los Rios, surely enough, proved efficacious. In prison one week; the next, on his way, with all his followers and train, and the exhibits from unknown coasts, to visit the Emperor himself. Bachelor Enciso

could not understand the turn affairs had taken; and raged accordingly. But his raging availed him nought. Pizarro had gone to Court.

At the time of this event, the Spaniards' knowledge of America was strangely blended of carefully charted and determined information, and the most vague and wild surmises. The shape of the new land was gradually appearing out of the mists of darkness, but there was still wide room for exploration and for conquest. Men knew the shore-line of the east coast, from the far south where Magellan had gone, up the long shore, past the great rivers, around the Pearl Coast, along Darien, Honduras, Yucatan, around Mexico and the sweeping curve of her gulf, so on to Florida where Ponce de Leon had died; thence upward to the north; the outline of a world which had been penetrated only here and there, and never deeply.

From the other side, along the South Sea, they knew little; they had crossed Darien, and, thanks to Balboa, knew that a mysterious sea lay beyond it; some believed this sea and the one which Magellan had sailed to be the same, but the shore-line had never been explored; only a little journey to the northwest by Espinosa, followed later by Gil Gonzales,— while to the southward, save for Andagoya's rounding of Cape San Miguel, the only definite knowledge had come through the efforts of Pizarro himself. He and Almagro, under the guiding hand of the pilot Ruiz, had come within sight of the snow-capped Andes, and had seen with desirous eyes the coast of the Golden Kingdom.

Along the short span of Mexico, the Spaniards knew fairly the width of the land, and the nature; but to the north and southward all was mystery. To the keen Pizarro, the north, of which he knew nothing, was much the less alluring of the two unknowns. Besides, an expedition had already

set forth, under Panfilo de Narvaez, to search the lands to northward; and Pizarro was no man to follow Narvaez's lead. Narvaez, the enemy of Cortez, the man who had lost an eye in his efforts to stop the Mexican conquest, Narvaez the resolute and the improvident, had sailed from Cuba for Florida, and was lost to his world forevermore. From the place where the wilderness took him no sound came back. This, then, was the state of affairs in the New World when Francisco Pizarro, with his llamas, and his golden and silver vessels of a design never seen in Europe, and his Peruvian boys, and his garments of vicuña wool — appeared before the Emperor, to get what he would have.

Luther's Home at Eisenach

In a concise and soldierly manner he presented his case. He told of the great land which he desired to tap, to the glory and material advantage of the Crown. He dwelt on this to great length, till he had, he thought, whetted the royal desires to the proper pitch. Then he began to tell the obstacles which had beset him in his endeavors to secure for Spain the glory which should be hers. He told of the scattering attempts of Gil Gonzales, De Olid, and the others, and the stiff-necked old Pedrarias; how he, Pizarro, with

Diego Almagro and a priest named Luque had wheedled a commission out of Pedrarias, and of the first vain expedition under this commission. Then, after two years, another expedition had set out, leaving the priest out of it. At the San Juan this party halted, and, after discussion, became two parties.

Pizarro told how he and his party went cruising about to keep the men busy and interested, while Almagro went back to the governor, to get more men and another ship;

Las Casas Blessing the Persecuted Natives

which ship and which men the governor would not send, believing it a fool's errand; Peru was too far. Almagro argued and pleaded in vain; the governor was firm. He would not even let Almagro return, but sent instead one of his own men, to bring Pizarro back.

"Your Majesty may conceive," Pizarro interrupted himself at this point, "that he did not know the man he had to deal with. All the governors in the islands could not have dragged me back a league. There he came, though, with his ship and his offer to take us back home. This was on the Island of Gallo. 'You will give the necessary orders,' said the governor's envoy, 'that we may embark at once.' I looked at my men, and they looked at me, their hungry eyes looking out of their lean sockets; for food had been scarce through the long weeks of our delay. For a moment I waited, and the men waited, and the envoy waited." Pizarro made a pause, for dramatic effect.

"On the sand before me I drew with my drawn sword a line, from east to west. 'Comrades,' I said to the men, 'to the south of this line lie toil, and hunger, and peril; there is death there — and glory. To the north are ease, and safety and poverty. To each man is the choice. For my part, I have set out for the Golden Kingdom, and I will not turn back. I am for the south!' And I strode across the line, and turned. . . . The first to follow me was Ruiz the pilot, smiling; after him fifteen others. That was all. Of the rest, one made a move towards the boats, and I and the sixteen others stood alone. . . . We could not go far, because we had no fit ship; but the main thing had been done. Seven months of waiting, and the governor, seeing that not I but he must yield, sent me a little boat. On that boat I sailed — and this is what I found, these vessels, and these garments, and these living things. But

I say to your Majesty that the richest land in all the world awaits only the sword to conquer it. And that sword is here!" He made it whirr in the air.

Pizarro found the Emperor an attentive listener, for he was ever in need of such riches as the new country promised him. Young as he was, he was the most powerful monarch in Europe, and his enemies pressed him on every hand. Among them he numbered Henry VIII of England, who was divorcing Catharine of Aragon, sister to Charles's mother, Juana of Aragon, and like her, a daughter of Ferdinand and Isabella; Francis I of France, whom he had lately subjected to a humiliating peace; Solyman the Magnificent, the greatest of Turkish Sultans; and the growing and unifying power of the Protestant princes of Germany, whose doctrines he believed to be subversive of his Empire.

These last had obtained their inspiration from a single Augustinian monk, Martin Luther by name, who in 1517 began the controversy with the Church of Rome which was winning adherents daily throughout the Teutonic world. Charles had met Luther face to face at the Diet of Worms in 1521, when he was constrained to give the reformer a safe conduct. By means now considered unfair he later placed him under the ban of the Empire. This led to Luther's retirement to the castle of Wartburg at Eisenach, during which he translated the New Testament into German. Later he translated the Books of Moses and the Psalms into the vernacular, and had just prepared a new hymn book and church service. Meanwhile the temporal rulers of Germany had grown so numerous in their adherence to Luther's doctrines that they were about to form the Smalkand League, which the Emperor recognized as an enemy. Money, therefore, the sinews of war, was what he needed above everything if he was to stamp heresy from the earth.

In ten days thereafter, Francisco Pizarro was ennobled by letters patent, he and all the faithful sixteen who had crossed the line at Gallo. He was made captain-general and adelantado of Peru, and — what was nearer to the thing he wanted and to the needs of the situation — he was even promised money from the imperial treasury to equip

Luther's Room in Wartburg Castle

the expedition which was to take possession of his new domain. Cortez having come back to Spain at about this time, busied with some matter of boundary rights and taxes in Mexico, Pizarro greeted him bravely, and Cortez added his word to the pleas for the equipment of Pizarro's forces. For a few brief, glorious days the two great adventurers, one at the crest of his luck and the other at what seemed the beginning of his, were received at court and entertained in the most magnificent manner. Then the Emperor Charles left Toledo, and they two remained to their tedious and

discouraging negotiations with the officials who were, after all, expected to deal them justice.

Cortez, having already brought home great wealth, and being firmly grounded in the favor of the exchequer, finished his business as quickly as he could, and made ready to return to his territory. He gave Christopher glowing accounts of his father's ability and worth, sent Christina a few gifts and a message or two, and promised the lad a commission when he should come to Mexico; but as for any immediate prospect of fair treatment from the governor of Cuba, he could offer little cheer. The enmity there was deep and lasting, he feared, being not only the wrath of Governor Velásquez, but behind that the hatred of Bishop Fonseca. However, there were lands to be granted in Mexico, and a considerable share of a great prize; all of which, sifted down, left Christopher with no better prospect than that he had found for himself — to follow Pizarro to Peru, and make the most of his chances.

The year ran round before the final conciliation was signed, and the money for the expedition ordered. Meanwhile Christina bade her son farewell, and sailed for Cuba, there to take Vasca from the convent, and to prepare a home for Hernando when the Mexican service should be done. She had done her part in Spain; her son had grown up, and had been trained to the tasks that lay before him; with that, she resigned him to the world of men, and the fate for which he had been born.

When the Queen, in the Emperor's absence, finally gave Pizarro the means to start out, he paused long enough to make a journey to Truxillo, in Estremadura, the village of his birth. Christopher accompanied him, and here the seamy side of his hero turned out its most amusing edge. Vanity it was — sheer vanity — to make this triumphal progress through the little hill town which he had quitted

WARTBURG CASTLE

so long before, in such different array. His glory, his friendship with the Emperor, his money and his prospects were all paraded before the admiring eyes of the humble folk in the village; he referred to Cortez now as cousin Cortez — an appellation which may have had some foundation in blood, but which was no credit to the virtue of his own parents, if true.

There was, however, a practical end to all this. Francisco Pizarro had gone away a mere youth, and he returned in the full promise of a great career. There were in Truxillo four brothers of his, and when he left the village they all followed him. Fernando, the eldest, being the one legitimate son of his father, was only a half-brother, but a man of education and courage; Gonzalo and Juan were full brothers to Francisco; and Martinez de Alcántara was also a half-brother, though he took no blood from the Pizarro house. Four brothers, and all of them soldiers, men of sinew and shrewdness, devoted and steel-true to their captain: this vanity had not been without its mother-wit.

As long as there was work still to be done in connection with the fitting out of Pizarro with his patents and his authorities, Christopher remained continuously by his chief, reading his letters, scrutinizing all things that they should be in order, and making himself useful as a well-ordered secretary should do. By the time of the triumphal march, however, his secretarial work was over, and he found that he was not needed any more. He had definitely accepted Pizarro's offer of a lieutenancy in his command, but until that expedition should be ready to sail, he found that he was likely to be idle.

He determined to sail at once for Cuba.

Christopher was not, at this time, an introspective youth, and he thought, when he thought of it at all, that his desire to go to Cuba was but the natural wish of any one to see

his old home. His mother would be there, also, and Vasca. . . . The more he thought of it, the more he found his mind recurring to his memories of Vasca, of his playmate of so long ago, whom, in the change and business of his life in Spain, he had to a degree, forgotten. Her image had been pushed back to the rear of his brain in all the years of his study and growth to young manhood, but now, to his surprise, he found that, when he looked at it, it was as clear and bright as ever. He found, to his surprise, that there was in his soul a keen impatience to see Vasca once more; it quite crowded out his other impatiences; and had he known what it might mean, he would perhaps have been disquieted by it.

THE PYRAMID OF THE SUN

In this frame of mind he set sail from Spain; and the leagues were long to Cuba.

CHAPTER XXVII

THE DREAMER AND THE LURE

THE Maya strain which had given to the grandsire of old chief Careta the name of the "outlander," and which had been evident in the quick intellect of Fulvia, came out again in Vasca as she grew to womanhood. It was a strange and disquieting metamorphosis which had come over her in the intervening years before Christopher returned to Cuba on leave, previous to joining Pizarro at Panama. The Spanish and Maya blood had come to the fore; she was dark, but not darker than girls whose faces he had seen, discreetly smiling, in the windows at Seville; she was tall, slender as a Spanish girl, but full throated and deep bosomed; she stood up lightly, as her forest-bred mother had done, and she walked with a swinging, eager step which suggested the trail and the free life of an Indian ancestry. But before all these things Christopher marked her eyes, not brown and dark like her mother's, nor blue, as Balboa's had been, but of a warm hazel color, with long lashes that shaded them, and brows and eyelids finely chiseled, arched in proud curves, not straight like the Indian women. That she was a woman, and beautiful, and that her bearing was that of a dreaming princess, were disconcerting enough to Christopher; he recalled vividly how he had vowed to love her always, when he had left her, so little and so forlorn, in the portico of the convent which was to be so long her home.

Vasca did not share his embarrassment at their meeting; she was too deeply glad of his return, since in all her life the few memories which were joyous and cheerful were

those of their childhood together. He had been occupied, in the intervening time, with the manifold activities of youth; she had always seemed to him, when he thought of her at all, as the child in the portico; to her, prayers for him and dreams for him had been everything that had come to break upon the peaceful monotony of the convent. When he came back, a scholar and a soldier, she saw at once that this was merely as it should be, and she was in no wise discomposed by it. Then, too, she had had letters from his mother — simple, comforting letters, which she had treasured through the months of silence; and in another fashion as well she knew him — in a curious, perturbing world of her own visions. But of this, since she did not understand and darkly feared, she did not speak.

Once only, during the brief and secret visit he made to his mother's house at this time, did he learn something of this visionary land. He spoke of the return of Magellan's ship, long before, and how it had moved him, boy as he was, to think on the lure of the unknown seas.

"I know," Christina remarked sadly, "how it all befell. It was so with your father before you. Don Christopher had only to lift his hand, when he was a lad, to carry him off to sea; the blood leaps to it. I am not unhappy, my son, but I have hoped that you might live a quiet life."

"Not a life of sloth and ease, mother. And I would have you think on the men who came home in that ship, and the glory it got them. They had done what never a man had done before. I mind me of the way they looked, so haggard, and bronzed, and glad. And the ship, furred with green weed and weathered grey. I can see her now."

There was a pause, and they all looked out over the bay in the moonlight. Then Vasca spoke, her voice low and clear.

"I see her, as I saw her then; and her sails were patched,

and they gleamed red in the sunset. You saw her name, Christopher, and you spelled out the letters. It was '*Victoria.*' You ran about afterwards, and were mad with wonder, and an old man with a wry neck ran after you to take you back. I saw it."

Christopher and his mother looked at her in amazement. She smiled, as if to herself, and her eyes lightened as she turned to them.

Ancient Peruvians at Worship

"It was in a dream, the sisters said, and though they liked it little, they never made me do penance; they only bade me go without my supper." Vasca laughed softly to herself.

"This is some black-art madness," Christopher exclaimed under his breath. "You were here in Cuba. All that was over the sea."

"I know," said Vasca. "But you see, I had a brother who had sworn always to love his sister, and that was when the Lure first came to him. I saw it."

The next instant she stood in the doorway, and again she laughed.

"I dreamed it — so? But I remember well that I had no supper — and that I was not asleep when I saw it." With that she was gone. She would never speak of this again, nor permit Christopher to inquire of it afterward. The sisters had not always been so lenient, and this vision world had been, in the main, a sad one; dream by dream, she had seen the Lure take hold; dream by dream, the lad

had come to feel his destiny, and she had wept over it in the long nights.

All this disturbed Christopher greatly, and his mother as well, partly because there was something uncanny about it, which awoke in them the pious fears of their time, and partly because it now appeared that one whom they had

The Marriage Ceremony of the Incas

always regarded as a child was possessed of strange powers and unchristian wisdoms. Vasca did well to conceal the extent of her gifts; such visions were not likely to bring her into nearer and more human companionship with those she loved, and this was what her heart most craved. After this one disclosure, she could not help seeing a difference in Christopher's feeling toward her. What the Lure was doing to draw him away from her, the vision was aiding and abetting. From that day onward the mystical thing stood between them, and when he bade her farewell, she was herself repelled into a cold and stoic temper that let him go without any expression of the grief she felt at the

loss of him. Nevertheless, she clung to Christina in his absence, and they got a sort of comfort out of their common loneliness.

There were times, too, when the prayers she had learned to say so fluently in her convent days ceased to comfort her; when she would disappear in the forest, and the Christian way was no longer her way; when the life of her mother awoke in her, and she became a Maya girl seeking for a lost and forgotten shrine. But of these times no one else ever knew, and she fought them off dutifully, as became one who had been well reared as a Christian maid and the daughter of a great captain.

THE FIRST INCA, MANCO CAPAC, AND HIS QUEEN, MAMA OCCLO HUACO

Christopher joined Pizarro again, not as his secretary, but as a lieutenant to Fernando Pizarro. His place as secretary to Francisco was taken by a young man, Francisco de Xeres. They joined Almagro at his camp down the coast from Panama, and for all the success of Pizarro's mission to Spain, and the number and equipment of the troop he brought with him, his old partner was little pleased with the arrangement when he learned about the four

brothers. He was open in his protest at first, declaring that he had been misled in the matter.

"You went to Spain for money, and the Emperor's commission, that we two might take the kingdom," he protested. "You come back with all your kin, and the commission favoring them as much as me. What have I to expect from that, more than a place in the rear rank when you need men? I have been a fool to trust you, Pizarro."

"Be still," Francisco growled. "Did you look to see the kingdom won by us two, single-handed, with the Emperor's commission in our knapsacks?"

"I looked for justice from you."

"That is what you have to expect from me. I warn you."

There was no further talk of it at the time, but Almagro nursed his grudge. The muster grew, and the expedition promised well in numbers and in valor. The Pizarros were all tireless workers, and Almagro himself, before they were ready to advance, caught the spirit of conquest, and filled the camp with his braggart enthusiasm, in spite of his jealousy. Hernando de Soto was among the arrivals who volunteered, and he brought with him, besides his experience in the Yucatan fighting and his reputation as a merciful but dashing and resolute soldier, a considerable troop of adventurers from Darien.

As Christmas approached, Pizarro grew more and more impatient, and insisted upon starting with his brothers and such ships as were ready. Almagro objected, but his opportunity for effective protest was gone. He had kept still too long. The Pizarros took 200 men, eighty horses, and two of the interpreters, and started down the coast. Almagro and De Soto remained, getting the caravels in order.

Luther Preaching in Wartburg Castle

The voyage was long and laborious, winds being contrary, and the ships overloaded with horses and guns and undermanned with effective seamen. They landed in the Bay of Tumbez in the early spring — the Bay of Tumbez, — the point toward which, at the beginning of his enterprise, Pizarro had struggled so desperately, and from which he had so often been obliged by bitter necessity to turn back.

Pizarro Sailing for Peru

Christopher began to see something of the actual procedure of the new world war. They built a village, taking the deserted walls of a forgotten native town, and made it into a sort of fort by the setting of the guns, and by stakes and trenches. They terrified the natives with their horses, but kept toward them a friendly demeanor, and paid for supplies in all manner of worthless trash. The first step, Pizarro knew well enough, was not to be taken against hostile people, but in the guise of friendship. If a man was even suspected of wronging a native, he suffered swiftly. There was the political situation to be mastered before steps could be taken toward conquest. Pizarro had not served under Balboa, or spent days in cautious questioning of Cortez, in vain.

During the spring months Pizarro entertained all the natives who would visit him, and kept the interpreters busy whenever there was a chance of talking. The others did

likewise. Christopher made a friend of one of the translators, the lad they called Felipillo, and from him learned much about the land they were invading.

Tumbez, the city of the older quests, proved to be a miserable and deserted town, stripped and worthless when they reached it. But a temple wall from which the tapestries and the golden ornaments have been violently wrenched is still suggestive to the conqueror. Tumbez had taken alarm, and its treasures were gone. In that case, Pizarro reasoned, there must be other cities where the wealth had been hidden; it behooved him to approach cautiously. The original camp was abandoned, Tumbez given up, and in a fertile plain some thirty leagues to the southward, they began the walls of a Spanish city, reared with masses and prayers, the King's City of San Miguel. There for a time they rested, while Fernando rode out in various directions, and the work of exploring the political condition of the country went on.

Pizarro Crossing the Andes

It was fairly clear from the first that here, as in all the native States, there was a division between those in power; but the task of solving the tangle of authority in a government organized as no European nation was organized, was

complex and difficult. Cortez had once fallen into an error which cost him dearly, when he assumed that Montezuma was a ruler for life; and Pizarro was in no mind to repeat the mistake. He inquired diligently about the ruler, and his council of state, and who was in actual control of the nation. Because there had been, but a short time before his arrival, a change of rulers by revolution, and not in the usual order, the information came in bits and fragments, which the Spaniards might patch together as best they could.

"Who is your ruler?" Pizarro would inquire of a chief who came to visit his town.

"The divine Inca," the man would reply, with low bows and salutations.

"What is his name?"

"Atahualpa, Regent of the Sun."

"Is he the son of the Inca who reigned before him?"

"Yes." Here the conversation usually paused, and the reply was spoken with smouldering resentment.

"How long has he reigned?"

"Three miserable years."

"Where is his palace?"

"In Cuzco."

"Who are his counselors?"

To this there was never a satisfactory reply, but usually signs of anger, and occasionally the mention of certain mountain chiefs who seemed to be in high disfavor. But of the Inca himself there was never a word of disrespect; he was the Inca, divine, Regent of the Sun, and his ways were not to be called in question, even by strangers who might be sky-gods themselves.

The interpreters, while they served admirably in matters of barter and travel, were of little use in political discussions. Their knowledge of the language hardly went so

far as to meet such requirements. So it took Pizarro five months to learn what he needed most to know — the state of the nation, and the authority of its King. Piecemeal, fact by fact, and weaving their inferences patiently through the information which was given them, they came to know the situation; once grasped, it was the key to all the aims and desires of their adventure.

ATAHUALPA, INCA OF PERU

Atahualpa, they learned, was the son of the late Inca, but he was not the legitimate heir, being the child of a captive woman, who was neither the Coya, or queen, nor even of Inca blood, as the law demanded. He had been a favorite of his father, and had been crowned Inca at the instigation of two lawless mountain chiefs. So, even as

the visitors said, he wore the tasseled scarlet diadem; he was the son of the old Inca, and he ruled the land; but he was a usurper, hated and feared by those who dared not deny his authority. He had put down the lawful heir, Huascar; he had set aside the next in line, Manco; and he was, even while Pizarro was inquiring into the conditions of his reign, on his victorious way from Quito to Cuzco, pausing at Caxamarca to choose from the great temple of the vestals a number of wives for his harem. Here the news of the coming of the bearded white men reached him, and he sent forth his brother, Titu Atauchi, as an ambassador to meet the visitors.

Meanwhile, De Soto had arrived with a hundred men and fresh horses, and Pizarro, leaving a garrison at San Miguel, had set out with the bulk of his force for the interior. At a place called Zaran, where the foothills of the Andes began to shoulder up against the sky, reminding the soldiers of the hills of Andalusia, Christopher beheld the first meeting with the ambassador of Atahualpa; there was the same formality, the gorgeous colors, the contrast and clash of races, that his father had beheld in Mexico; Pizarro's tactics were the same, too. He had sat at the feet of Cortez.

The envoy of the Inca threw himself on the earth before his guest, when they met, and addressed him as "holy and mighty son of Viracocha." The interpreters could not translate, but the attitude of the ambassador was in itself eloquent. So a Greek of the Homeric time might have fallen in worship before Bacchus, when the wine-god came triumphing from the conquest of the Orient. Here, too, there were gods of heathendom to fight for them, and prophecies to rise up and burn in the support of the Spanish arms. What Quetzal' had been to Cortez, Viracocha was to be to Pizarro.

CHAPTER XXVIII

CAXAMARCA

NOVEMBER 15, 1532, Pizarro led his slender forces into Caxamarca.

The objective point of the expedition, finally, was to be the sacred city of Cuzco, but since the Inca stayed at Caxamarca, that city, next in consequence to the capital, was for the moment more important. They found the town to be of good architecture, but of comparatively small size, housing not more than 2000 or 3000 souls. It was built around a plaza or mustering ground, used in peaceful times for a market, and the Spaniards camped all about this square, in the market buildings, — or barracks, as Pizarro called them. They were near the great temple of the Sun, where innumerable Inca vestals served the sacred flame; and beside the temple, rising out of a labyrinth of walls and ditches, stood the mighty watch-tower of the city, its stairways ascending, both outside and in, by spirals, like the pictured pride of Babel. On the hillsides outside the town they saw that night the innumerable watch-fires of the Peruvian army. The Inca was not in the town, but in

THE INCA BRIDGE NEAR GUARANDA, ECUADOR

his camp, two miles to the northward, and in the evening Fernando de Soto and Fernando Pizarro took some three dozen horsemen, and went out to convey to him the greetings of their commander. It was not a safe movement, but it was a necessary one, and because of it, a strange thing happened:

A Herd of Llamas

In the forest, outside of Santiago, a girl knelt before an altar of loose stones, on which a candle burned amid a little heap of leaves, the symbols of the pagan and the Christian sacrifice in one common fire. The girl prayed, wildly sometimes, but she did not always address her prayers to the same beneficent divinity. There were moments when she could not pray, but lay prone before her shrine, her breast to the earth, her fingers clutching in the moss, her eyes closed, and her breath almost ceasing to return. The peril of the Lure was upon one she loved, and beyond the leagues of untrodden wilderness and unplowed seas she felt the danger, and was shaken to the soul by the mystical consciousness of it.

To Christopher, riding in Fernando's train, the visit to the Inca was an occasion of mark and celebration; he saw only the glamour of romance, the strangeness of it, and he rocked with laughter at the fright of the Inca's guards when De Soto, more in mischief than for the sake of the effect which he actually produced, touched his horse with the spur, so that he curvetted gallantly, and the warriors threw down

their spears with the blades of bronze, and ran headlong from the place. The tragedy of Caxamarca was yet to be played, and the younger men enjoyed the comedy to its fullest, though they were sober enough in the presence of the Emperor himself.

The Inca was seated among his chieftains, his person surrounded by his slaves and his favorite wives, all dressed in the most magnificent garments, the slaves in cotton of bright colors, the wives in splendid weavings of vicuña wool, and all of them glittering with gold and silver ornaments. De Soto spoke for Pizarro, greeting the mighty ruler with due ceremony, and begging that his master might be permitted to appear before him to present the salutations of his King beyond the seas.

Atahualpa replied with equal ceremony, inviting the Spaniards to occupy the public building around the square, until the next day, when the Inca would be pleased to enter his city and speak with the commander of the strangers, — at which the men around De Soto suppressed their smiles, since Francisco had already anticipated the invitation.

After the interview they rode safely back to the town; later in the evening, the whole camp was aroused by the news that the Inca had beheaded the warriors who had fled when De Soto spurred his horse; the streets rang with the mirth of the soldiers over this droll bit of diablerie; the town echoed with jests and laughter, and for the moment the threatening eyes of the night that burned innumerable on the hills, as far as one could trace their slopes, were forgotten. The watch-fires of the Peruvian army were not the only lights that night; the lanthorns gleamed from the doorways of Pizarro's headquarters, where the officers met in council, and far into the small hours of the morning the planning and counterplanning, the discussion and argument went on. The camp around the square sank to silence,

Ruins of the First Spanish Settlement in Peru

but not to sleep; there were heavy hearts about the barracks, and old campaigners who prayed to be delivered from a place of danger more terrible than any they had ever known. They had marched into the town lightly enough, and they looked for some welcome from the Inca; behold, along the slopes, the camp-fires of his imperial armies, unknown, unsuspected; and they in the square, though Spaniards of the most utter courage, were few — so pitifully few.

Inca Terraces near Lima

As the night wore away, there came a change in the deliberations. The lanthorns of the captains were extinguished, and the council broke up. The decision had been reached, the Rubicon crossed. The next day, Pizarro ordered, the Inca was to be their prisoner.

Having no access to the watch-tower, the Spaniards could only await the Inca's approach in perfect readiness.

In the plan for the ambush there was none of the subtlety of Cortez; Pizarro directed it in a fashion of his own, as characteristic as it was brutal, at once sly and direct. In the buildings around the square, with their deeply shadowed arcades, the men were stationed. From the sunlit space not so much as the flicker of a blade was visible. So, for interminable hours, they waited.

THE TEMPLE OF THE SUN

Christopher was serving, for the moment, in De Soto's detachment of horse. They were concealed along one of the great passages leading into the square, and the horses were stamping the earthen floor, fretted at the crowding and the long, dark wait. In the corresponding passage at the other corner of the square, the other division of cavalry stood; between them, from the low roof, masked by some blankets slung from poles, were the two falconets, the only cannon which had been carried by the expedition. The infantry lurked

along the walls between the two troops of horse. Pizarro himself, with twenty picked men, took his stand midway of the square, under the falconets, and this was the point from which the signal was to be given.

The men around Christopher speculated on the chances of the day with fatalistic nonchalance. What was in store — that they must endure; so be it. They could see the stirring of troops, now and then, along the crests of the great hills beyond the town. No one doubted that they were in the midst of the Inca's armies, and that the whole chance of the company lay in the success of the plot to capture the Inca. What if he should not come?

De Soto was quiet during this smothered speculation, though now and then Christopher could see his lips move as if praying softly.

"Estévan," he said, as the thrill of a reported movement in the roadway subsided, "it may be that we shall not come alive out of this day's work. Have you thought of it?"

"It has been in my mind since dawn."

"Have you thought of — anything else?"

"Yes," Christopher answered, and paused. He had been about to tell of the other thought which had possessed him, the image which had been before him, touching him with a poignant regret; but that, after all, was his own thought; he closed his lips firmly, and gazed out into the sunlit patch before him.

"You and I," De Soto went on, "have been friends. It may be that one of us may survive and not the other. If I should be the one to fall, there is a word I would have taken, when it may be done, to one in Spain. A word to a lady."

"I will take it, captain, if I live; though I pray it may not be necessary."

De Soto leaned over and whispered in the lad's ear —

a name and a simple message. Christopher nodded, and for a moment they were silent. Then, swallowing hard, and holding his face calm by sheer resolution, he spoke low in his turn. "In Cuba, at Santiago, in my mother's house," he said, "is a lady. You understand me, captain."

"What is her name?"

"Vasca Nuñez de Balboa."

As he spoke, there was a stir and a tremor through the ambuscade. From the roadway at the opposite corner of the plaza, a long procession of men in gorgeous robes came marching, and among them, high aloft in a palanquin decked with gold and scarlet plumes, rode the usurper, Atahualpa.

When the Inca, with his guard and his chieftains, marched into the plaza, they found no one; there was a breathless pause, and a movement among the guards, as though a superstitious dread had come over them; the white men, it appeared, had vanished; the Sun had called his children. Then, walking slowly out from the opposite side of the square, appeared the priest, Father Valverde, with Felipillo at his heels. He carried a Bible and a Cross, and he went straight toward the Inca, and stood before him, speaking without any salutation or mark of reverence.

Felipillo interpreted as best he could the long harangue which followed. It began with an account of the creation of Adam, passed by easy stages through the history of the tribes of Israel, expounded the dogmas of the Trinity and the Redemption, the story of the Crucifixion and the Resurrection, related the calling of Peter and his appointment to be Christ's vicegerent upon earth, and the succession of the Popes, and finally explained the papal authority over all the Kings of earth.

"Inca of Peru," he concluded, "his Holiness has commissioned the Emperor of Germany and Spain, the greatest of living monarchs, and him to whom we bow in allegiance,

to bring under the sway of the Church all peoples who dwell in the land of Terra Firma. To bring this word, comes the great general, Francisco Pizarro. I beseech you to receive him fairly, to abjure the sins and errors of your heathen faith, and embrace the holy Catholic Church, in which alone you may hope to escape the everlasting fires of hell. Fur-

Capture of Atahualpa by Pizarro (*From an old print*)

thermore, I command you to submit yourself as a vassal to our Emperor, and your people to be his tributaries."

Of all this tirade, no one can say how much was comprehensible to Atahualpa; probably very little, considering the weakness of Felipillo in matters requiring a knowledge of abstract conceptions; his Spanish was a slight veneer at best, and the dogmas of the Church do not flow readily into primitive tongues. But Atahualpa did grasp one fact without question. He had seized a throne to which he had no right, and the strong chiefs of Quito had upheld him. Here, from beyond the seas, came strange beings — men, perhaps, or gods — and they would, sooner or later, join

in his war. Would they help or hinder? He had hoped that they might be persuaded to his banner, and here, in the first meeting with them, he was bidden to give in his allegiance. He had offered peace, but was prepared for war.

DE SOTO'S CHARGE AGAINST THE PERUVIANS
(*From the drawing by Freeland A. Carter*)

"By whose authority do you claim these things?" he asked angrily.

"By the word of this Book," said Valverde, and with that, never so much as dropping on one knee, he handed the Bible to the Inca. For a moment the King hesitated, the thing in his hand; he turned it over, and the cover fell back, so that the leaves fluttered.

"Witchcraft!" cried the Inca, throwing the book from him in a rage.

Valverde picked it up, turned toward the hidden commander of the Spaniards, and stepped swiftly back. He had played his part in a masterly fashion, and now it was done.

Speaking toward the darkened archways, he stretched out his arms toward his countrymen. "Behold," he exclaimed, "the pride of the infidel, and the dishonor of the Word of God. While we stand talking, the square fills with the enemy. Do your will, Pizarro; I absolve you."

As he spoke, the blankets fell from the poles above, and the boom of the falconets echoed terribly around the enclosed plaza.

Pizarro sprang forth from his hiding, a white scarf, the signal for the attack, waving in his hand. The thunder of musketry broke forth from the arcades. Pizarro waved the scarf again, just as the thick cloud of smoke hid him from sight, and the two troops of cavalry charged from their hiding, pouring out upon the frightened mob in the square.

The Peruvians were stunned by the noise and the deadly terror of the attack. The plaza heaved with the fighting like a storm-smitten harbor under the stroke of a tempest. Around the scarlet-and-gilt splendor of the imperial litter the blades of Pizarro's twenty rose and fell like flails, and the earth turned horrid and slippery with their harvest. Fernando Pizarro, with a troop of his bravest followers, seized the watch-tower, flinging its defenders from the circling ramparts. There was no battle — only the sickening toil of a desperate butchery. The waiting army on the hills never had any signal, save the drumming of the guns, to tell them their leader was trapped, for of the hundreds in the square, no one went forth till the Inca was taken, and the messengers rode out to deliver his royal commands, as he sent them, abject and humiliated as he was, at the bidding of Pizarro.

The band of adventurers in the dark arcades had won their daredevil game. In his own city, in the very midst of his own army, they had taken captive an Emperor.

CHAPTER XXIX

A PLEDGE AND A PRAYER

WHEN one has confided to a friend his most intimate trust, one must needs be drawn to that friend the more closely because of it. To Christopher, because he had whispered, much against his will, Vasca's name to Fernando de Soto, the young captain became more than ever an object of admiring fealty. This was the more marked because, from the day of Atahualpa's capture, the black and seamy side of Pizarro's nature became grimly apparent, and of all his officers, De Soto alone dared to raise his voice for ideas of humanity or justice. In the year following that event, the instinct of conquest in Christopher was satisfied to the utmost. He saw the work of plunder at its height, and was appalled; he saw, too, something of the work of exploration, and was fascinated.

PANORAMA OF LIMA, PERU

Atahualpa governed the country, or as much of it as had originally admitted his claim to the Inca crown, from his captivity. Estévan saw, of course, what that meant; that

Pizarro, speaking through the Inca claimant, governed Peru. He saw the temples, one after another, despoiled of their gold and silver, and made forcibly into chapels; he was present when Atahualpa, despairing in his captivity, offered the famous ransom; saw the measurements of the room, seventeen feet in width and twenty-two feet long,

THE SANTA CRUZ RIVER IN PATAGONIA

and the mark on the walls, as high as the Inca could reach — the room that was to be filled with gold that Atahualpa might go free; and saw day by day the precious tide creep up the walls, eloquent of the wealth of the land and the devotion of the people to a ruler who had never deserved their love.

It was a wonderful year, and the Spaniards one and all were filled with exultation over it, for this gold was to be divided; and when the Emperor and the captains had taken their share, each man had his claim. From this journey, no one need go home in want. Fortunes were there for the taking.

It was not all plunder. They found the borders of the

land, and followed the Inca's roads up to the impregnable mountains, and coasted down the shore till they made certain that this was the coast around which Magellan had crept — that the South Sea and his Pacific were one. So the western edge of Terra Firma, to the southward, was added to the known lands.

There was fighting here and there. Expeditions of search and reconnoissance were to be made, rumors of trouble and insurrection to be traced and sounded. It was while Christopher and De Soto were absent on such an excursion that Pizarro trumped up the accusation of complicity in the murder of the legitimate Inca, Huascar, and tried Atahualpa, himself and Almagro sitting as judges. There was little enough of evidence to the crime alleged, but it was easy to prove that the captive was guilty of idolatry and polygamy. The golden chamber of the ransom was full to the line. Pizarro's invalid sense of justice had died. Atahualpa was sentenced, and strangled in the public square with a bowstring.

De Soto, returning, cried out against the execution as a fiendish outrage, and Christopher, sick at heart for the dead love of one who had been his hero, wept over it. Pizarro, scowling grimly, proclaimed the dead man's son, Toparca, to be Inca in his father's place. The boy died, and the land seemed for the moment to wake from its stupor and prepare for its defense. The last march De Soto and Christopher made with Pizarro was the memorable journey to Cuzco; their only battle was the fighting along the route; and their final view of their ruthless commander was in his hour of triumph, when Manco, the legitimate heir to the diadem of the Incas, came in and made his surrender to the "sons of Viracocha." There they left Pizarro, and set out, laden with their shares in the enterprise, for home.

De Soto went to Spain, to carry his own message to the

THE DEATH OF ATAHUALPA

lady whose name he had whispered that day in the arcades of Caxamarca. But before he and Christopher parted at Acla, he told him of an ambition which was burning within him.

"I am not minded," he said, "to search again for money for myself, since I have profited heavily by this work we have done. I am not one to give myself wholly to the carrying of the Cross, for I see that is to be done by men who are born to it, and who have the spirits of the martyred saints within them. But there is a glory to be won, where a man wins greatly for Spain and the Emperor. There is still a vast territory of which we know nothing. And there is the land of wonders and miracles to search out — the fountain of youth and the valley of diamonds. I shall call for you yet, my friend."

"I will come when you call me," said Christopher.

"Meanwhile I shall go to Spain, to get what I may from this past business. For believe me, no matter what we have done, the credit goes wholly to Pizarro. I must choose my own task, if I am to have reputation for the doing of it."

"Have you decided what the task is to be?"

"One does not choose these things hastily. I was not born to starve on Gallo Island with thirteen men, and no boat. No, Estévan. When you go with me, it shall be with good ships, good horses and the King's consent; and of these, I must first get me the last, for the land I have in mind has been often granted, but never won and held."

"I see what is in your mind," Christopher remarked, "and it suits me well. But to win this land, you must work through Cuba, and no fair game can be played there while Velásquez governs."

"You show me where to begin. I must supersede Velásquez."

Christopher smiled sadly. "You would so do me a great service — and my family as well."

De Soto laughed to himself. "I had forgotten," he said. "You and your people have wrongs and estates there. So be it. I shall restore your rights, and have you

The Valley of Snow in the Andes of Chile

well married, and see that you prosper — when I am governor."

"I did not think to meet with mockery —"

De Soto faced about, still laughing. "Mockery! Mother of Heaven, I mean what I say!" His voice went grave as he spoke. "I have set myself, in my own mind, to do this thing. If I must first govern Cuba, and put the old man Velásquez aside, that shall be done. I will not turn back. How, think you, came Pizarro by his grant and his conquest — by bowing the knee to governors? No, my friend; nor will I."

Christopher pledged his sword to his friend when it

should be needed, and so they parted. Another two months, and he was back in Cuba, and the old home life had begun to knit its ties around him. Many things were the same; they still lived in quiet, almost in seclusion, and they still looked forward to his father's return. But while there

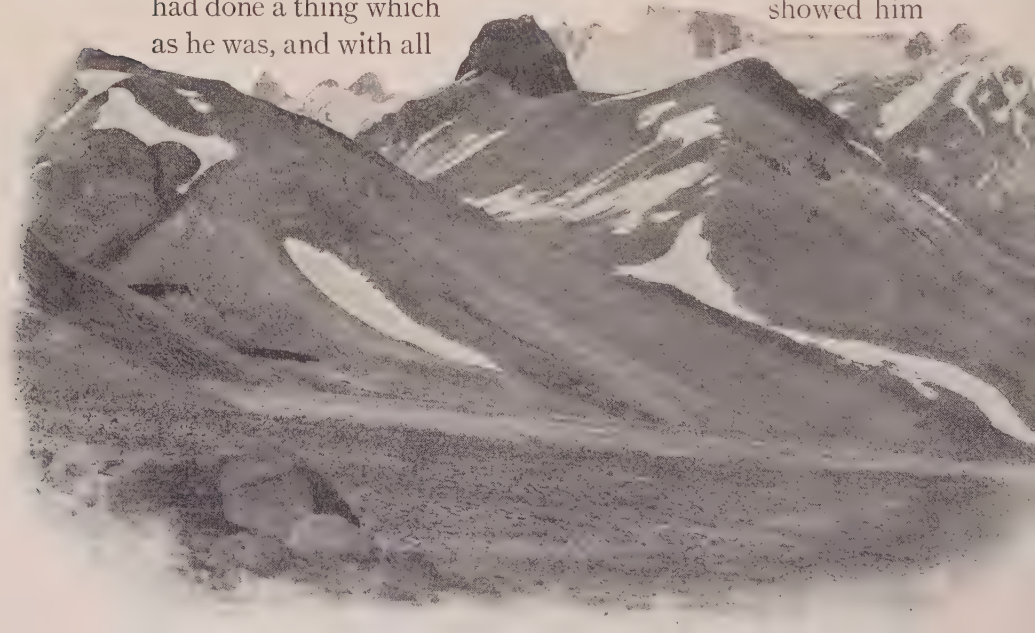
THE PASS OF UPSILLATA, CHILE

was little outward change since he had been gone, he found that many things were different. His mother and her love could not change, that he knew; but in Vasca the years had done the work of years. On his last trip he had seen, to his uneasiness and confusion, that she was no longer a child; but he had yet to learn how utterly she had become a woman. Her Maya blood, while it perpetuated in her many of the traits of the youth of the world, carried with it also its strange, almost too sudden maturity.

Christopher, who knew little or nothing about the things that ran in Vasca's veins, the things she had drawn into her being with her mother's milk, felt himself more and

more helpless before the strange renascence of dreams and thoughts in Vasca which were born of no Christian soul. Her enigmatic eyes puzzled him, too, and her beauty made him uneasy, even while he found an ever-increasing pleasure in watching it. There were others who found a similar pleasure, and Christopher was conscious of a new element in his life. If it was not jealousy, it would be hard to find what name to give it.

One of the most ardent of Vasca's admirers was a nephew of the *intendente*, named Caminez, a scowling, rather sour-natured young soldier, who had no love for Christopher in any case, and who treated him with scant courtesy. Christopher knew that evil things had been said of this man, and knew further that these things were true. For a time he was in doubt whether it was his duty to forbid the man the house; had it not been for his strange and uncomprehended personal feeling in the matter, he would have done so at once. Before he had made up his mind one way or the other, however, the young man's visits came to a sudden end. Christopher was too relieved to ask any questions, and for her part Vasca had no explanation she wished to give. The truth was that her admirer had done a thing which showed him as he was, and with all



the blood of Balboa thrilling in her, Vasca had between set teeth forbade him ever to approach her again. He, venomous but cowed, retired; Vasca, ordinarily so gentle, had an enemy, and an enemy who would not tire, who made up in venom what he lacked in courage, and whose single virtue, tenacity, made him only the more dangerous.

Of all this, however, Christopher knew nothing, and Vasca, when she was quit of her undesirable suitor, thought of it no more herself. Still less did she imagine that a casual confidence which she had made, regarding her mother and her mother's gods, could, in evil hands, become a terrible weapon for her heart. She knew unknowable things, but they related to those she loved, not to those who were not dear.

Christopher, never of an analytic turn of mind, found himself studying things he had never thought of before. Regarding Vasca and himself they were, and the new introspection, so interesting yet so disquieting, kept him awake far into the nights. It was not alone that he could not understand her attitude toward him,— he could not understand his own toward her. Perhaps this change had come merely because they were both grown up,— but he could not think it so.

"For look you," as he argued to himself, "if I love my little foster-sister, when we are children, good; but if we grow up and she comes to be haunted by strange visions, so that I fear her, and she seems as one possessed, shall I not grieve? Yet it is not so with me. I shudder for her soul, and I dare not look into her eyes, and she repels me. Yet when I was in peril, I must needs speak her name, and when I stood guard in the night, I could not but think of her. It is more as if I had loved her and lost her." So far his meditations, and then her face would come before him, and he would fling off the fit of melancholy and bid

himself think no more of it. But for all that, never a day went by that he did not feel the strange pain, when he looked at her, of knowing that she still dreamed, and still dreaded the Lure that had so plainly marked him for her own. For a man does not follow new shores once, or look upon virgin peaks, or enter the trodden streets of unremembered cities, and then go quietly home and never again long for the sea-ways.

So, because he could never look frankly into her eyes, he avoided her, and Vasca, stung at the heart because of it, grew suddenly conscious of her dependence, and her mother's race, and all manner of fancied faults and blemishes. Once, as she prayed in the forest, before an altar that had more of the Maya than the Christian about it, Christopher came upon her. He was walking quietly, his head bent, and he did not see her until he was within the glade where she knelt, and then he paused, blinking in some surprise, before he spoke. She grew conscious of his presence, and turned, wide-eyed and dumb with surprise and agony, knowing it was too late now to conceal her secret.

"Vasca!" he exclaimed. She could not answer.

"You were praying." She nodded silently, and the red began to mount up in her cheeks. He came nearer, so that the pitiful little altar stood between them; on it lay the offerings she had brought to her forest-gods, the flowers, braided and woven with grasses and the fiber of palm-bark.

The man shuddered, as though from cold. "I don't understand — Vasca," he said, confusedly. "I don't understand this — this prayer of yours." The rigors of his faith steeled him to the task before him. "Surely you might go to the cathedral — you might pray as my mother has taught you."

At the words, "*my* mother," she turned her face away, and her form stiffened. Had she not had a mother, too?

"This is the thing that haunts me," Christopher went on, "this witchcraft in you. In the name of the Holy Mother, can you not shake it off — Vasca — for our sake?"

She stood up defiantly. He had brought still another mother into his lesson, and she had already learned it well.

RELIGIOUS PROCESSION OF ANCIENT PERUVIANS (*From an old engraving*)

"I will go," she said, in a low voice. "Since I am held to be accursed and a pagan, and since I am despised, and my prayers are scorned, I will go."

"Stop," he commanded her. "There is a duty between us two, Vasca, and what else there may be I know not. Let us understand one another."

"I fear me," she said, slowly, looking straight into his eyes, while her own were beginning to blaze with anger, "we shall never understand one another. If you do not know why I am here — how shall you ever know?" Her voice broke, and the anger seemed to break with it. "Ah, Christopher, I can endure this life no longer. I must go."

"So, so," he wondered. "There is a hatred back of this, or a fear. Promise, Vasca, that you will not leave my mother, for I begin to see there is more to this than I could have known. Promise. I will leave you again, and you shall be at peace."

She could not promise, but only gazed at him, wondering and like one stricken. She turned away and fled down the wood path, swiftly vanishing into the shadowed depths. He stooped over the shrine, hesitated, and then lifted the woven flowers, almost reverently. Under them, on the top of the stone, lay the golden bracelet he had given her on his return from Peru, and with it a folded bit of paper, much worn, with bits of a seal clinging to it; a memory rushed over him, and he recognized a letter he had written, long before, and sent to his little foster-sister by a nun who was going out to the islands. Under the letter was a thing still older — a tiny carved image with which they had played as children, a doll they had named El Capitan.

Three gifts he had given her, and she had offered them up to her forest gods. Now he knew, as never before, the meaning of the strife of faiths in which they lived. His inquisition was before him.

A Grand View of the Chilean Andes

CHAPTER XXX

TIDINGS

BANISHMENT, self-imposed and indeterminate, seemed to Christopher the only course open to him. A rift like the fissure of an earthquake had opened in his home, and talking would not mend it. The next spring found him in Mexico, and Vasca — poor, gentle, proud,

The Pyramid of the Sun, from the Pyramid of the Moon

wayward Vasca — knew this time that it was not the Lure that enticed him; but she was none the happier for the knowledge.

He found his father, and with the consent of Cortez, took the paternal place and commission, albeit Cortez was none too well pleased to exchange an old head, even though it had grown grey, for a young one. Father and son spoke frankly with each other about everything, save the one thing uppermost in the son's mind, which was the reason

for his coming. With the profits of the work in Mexico, and the still greater profits of Christopher's service in Peru, they were established for life, and Fortune smiling, so would their descendants be. A new governor in Cuba, and they would be rich.

"I leave you here, my son," Hernando said, soberly, "because it is a place for a soldier, and I have always meant

A Jungle Marsh near the Mouth of the Rio Grande

that you should follow the honorable trade of arms. Cortez will make you such an officer as I may be proud of owning for a son."

"I had not thought of the service of a soldier, so much as the finding of new roads, and lands, and strange peoples."

"I know," said the older man, "I know. God bless you!"

So there was a word to Cortez, and because he had always that sort of use for the younger heads, Christopher set out in a few days for the Yucatan boundary; and after that he went up to the Rio Grande, and thence to the westward to Culiacan, on the frontier, where he was stationed, in company with a keen old friend of his, Fray Marcos, a Franciscan, whom he had known well, long before in Peru.

When he first met Fray Marcos, they made a night of their talk of the Peruvian days, and the men they had known in Pizarro's forces, and Fray Marcos told him the way of his own return to Mexico, and the reason for it.

"I was in Peru with Pizarro," the monk said, "because Las Casas wished it — not through any choice of my own. Pizarro was not an easy commander for a church-man to walk with. Almagro was little better. I went with him, later, after you left us. When De Soto was gone, there was no checking Pizarro, but Almagro was different — he still had some fear of God, though none of man, saving Pizarro only. But Almagro's path was never easy — never easy."

A Sacred Cross in Peru

The friar's cheery eyes narrowed, smiling at the memories of Almagro's difficulties.

"It happened, once when Almagro had set out for a great temple, up Quito way, that he heard of another army of white men coming, and he camped to wait for them. Next day they arrived, and lo, there were some five hundred fellows, all reckless old campaigners, and Pedro de Alvarado, Cortez's old lieutenant, at their head. They pitched camp beside us, and there was some little disputing about rights, and commissions and charters. Almagro sent to Pizarro for help, but before it came, he had arranged mattters."

"Did they not fight?" Christopher asked. "I cannot fancy those two men in any manner of negotiations."

Fray Marcos shook with laughter at the thought of the encounter.

"There was argument, but no bloodshed. I was the mediator; I made the treaty. It was simple enough. 'Do what you will,' says Almagro, 'I only demand that he leave our territory.' 'This land belongs to the Emperor,' says Alvarado, 'and I am a Spaniard.' There the matter stopped, so Almagro went out and began enlisting Don Pedro's men; he got some two hundred of them that night, and it cost him a cartload of silver. Don Pedro had wind of it in the morning. 'Go to,' says Don Pedro, 'he shall have them all, but let him give the silver to me, since I have been so kind as to bring him some useful reinforcements.' With that I went to Almagro with the message, and I can see him now as he stormed over it. But in the end he saw how much cheaper it was to buy the one man than the three hundred, so he paid Don Pedro handsomely, and Don Pedro went back to Darien in state, with me as his chaplain, 'for now,' says he, 'that I have come into great wealth, I may as well have all the advantages of it, and I am minded to have a good man to pray for me.' So we came back again to Mexico."

It was morning, the gradual, pale yellow dawn of the desert country, when the monk and his young comrade had done with their recollections. They went out on the house-top, stretching their legs, to look at the day before going to sleep, and for a moment they paused, fascinated by the waves of glowing color that seemed to rise, dry and vibrant, from the awakened earth. To the northward, where the valley stretched away, they descried figures of men moving down upon the village, straggling along, a dozen or more of them, some with packs and some with their bows and javelins.

As this party came nearer, something in the appearance

An Inca Road in Ecuador

of the leading figures attracted the attention of Fray Marcos, and he indicated them with a gesture, not taking his eyes off the approaching group. "Strange," he muttered, "I don't understand that." As the men came nearer, he exclaimed, "Spaniards! Look, man — those are not all Indians. How came any of our people from the north?"

As the men drew nearer, Christopher saw plainly that he was right. At least three of the party were white men, and a fourth had more the look of a negro than an Indian. Christopher and the friar hastened down to the street.

If Fray Marcos was excited by their arrival, they themselves were overwhelmed by the finding of Spaniards in the village. Instantly the rumor of some unusual affair ran through the houses, and the entire garrison turned out, half-clad and scrambling in their curiosity, to learn who it might be. They heard that day a tale as wild as any that was ever sealed with truth, and the leader of the straggling party which reached Culiacan in the dawn of that day in April, 1536, was made a hero. His name was Cabeza de Vaca; his comrades were Dorantes, Castillo, a negro whom they called Estevanico, and some Indians whom they had employed as bearers.

These four had sailed with Narvaez, eight years before. Fray Marcos and Christopher continued their vigil of adventures that day, and it was late that night when they finally slept.

Cabeza told them substantially the tale which he afterward wrote down, and which won for him some considerable honors from the Emperor. He had been the treasurer of Narvaez's expedition. The chances of the enterprise had been marred by waste, and by incompetence and injustice, from the first. He told of their landing; of their fighting through the swamps to the high, red plains, and, after much useless marching, back to the sea again. And

here, in sight of the great highway of safety, lay the beginning of their tragedy. The ships were lost.

Back and forth along the coast they searched, and found nothing. All agreed that if they had drifted, it must have been to the westward, so the whole force turned in that direction, smitten with fevers and poisons, ill-fed, and fighting at every step with the stealthy forest-people. Making

THE TORTURE OF GUATOMOTZIN (*From the painting in the National Museum of Mexico*)

camp, at the end of a month, they found that the sick were too numerous to move farther; too many of the horses had been killed — and most of them eaten. A fellow who had been a smith, in the old, safe days, offered to forge bolts for ship-building from the swords and armor, and they grasped at his plan eagerly. So the forges flowed in the wood, and they toiled madly at the construction of six crazy boats. Before they were ready to launch, there was need of but five, and the last one was abandoned to rot in the green mould under the great live-oaks.

So they launched forth, and coasted for six weeks, till they came to the mouth of the great river — Pineda's river,

which we now know as the Mississippi — where they found that the fresh water came far out into the sea, so that they no longer needed to go ashore and fight for drink. Here, while they rested, the storm struck them, and the frail craft, overloaded and ill navigated, were scattered under the lash of it. One boat Cabeza saw sinking, and Narvaez went down with it. Another boat, closely following, beat through the welter of drowning men, and went on, unable or unwilling to save them; then it, too, veering suddenly, split under the rage of the gale, and its crew went to join the others.

"Seeing that," Cabeza observed, "we covered our faces, and cut down our rag of a sail, and gave ourselves up, each man praying as best he might. That was because we did not know what we were like to find ashore, and we still wished to be saved."

He told of their being cast ashore, and of their fighting, and of his final success as a sorcerer, physician, and trader among the natives. A wonderful tale, that of Cabeza's, of this march, sustained only by his wits, through 2000 miles of land where never white man's foot had trod; a tale which roused Fray Marcos, and Christopher, and Francisco de Coronado, the governor, to a perfect madness of wonder and curiosity.

Fray Marcos was the one first chosen to explore the land Cabeza had traveled, and to find the "towns with houses of stone and lime, three and four stories high for common men, and that of the lords of five, all placed together in order; and on the doorsills and lintels, many figures of turquoise stone;" the land of the Seven Cities of Cibola. Coronado had it in mind to go himself, later, so that he would give no man a commission to precede him; but Fray Marcos, who was a monk, he permitted to go, since it was plain that he would make no conquest save for the

Church, and would take no gold that would be considerable.

Cabeza would not go back, but Estevanico, the negro, who had been well treated among the natives, was willing to act as a guide. In Mexico, he explained naïvely, he could hope for nothing save blows and curses; in Cibola,

In the Courtyard of the Hospital of Jesus, Founded by Cortez in the City of Mexico

the chiefs spoke reverently to him, and made him presents of turquoises, and hides, and maidens. Hence it behooved him to return to the northward. Fray Marcos was not pleased at this; he would have preferred to start with a pair of Franciscan brothers, and the information he had received from Cabeza; he had no mind to be heralded by a black man who went flaunting his turquoises and his handsome Indian girls; and, as it proved, this was the very root of his difficulties in the Cibola country.

Fray Marcos never reached the Seven Cities, because Estevanico, coming too boldly and too greedily under the walls of the town of Zuñi, was denied admittance; thereat,

growing frightened, he ran away, and the elders of the town, learning of his flight, sent men after him and they killed him. The news of this so discouraged the men Fray Marcos had with him, that he was forced to turn back; at which Coronado was not displeased, for he was even then getting together his forces for the march, and he did not care to be anticipated.

As for Christopher, he was disappointed with the whole affair, and spoke openly of his vexation at not being allowed to go with his friend the friar; whereat there were some words between him and Coronado and he was promptly relieved of his duties. On his way back to Mexico-Tenochtitlan, where Cortez had his headquarters, he heard news from Cuba — great news that turned his steps homeward, for he knew the time had come for the enterprise to which he had long before pledged his sword.

Fernando de Soto, with a goodly train and the lady his wife, had landed in Cuba, as governor of the island.

In the Alameda, City of Mexico

CHAPTER XXXI

THE PLEDGE

A HUNDRED greetings to Vasca passed through Christopher's mind on the homeward voyage — a hundred excuses for his absence, pleas for forgiveness, hopes that their misunderstandings might be over and done. The great opportunity, the journey with De Soto, no longer attracted him, and he regretted now that the time had come to redeem it, that he had pledged his word.

Vasca welcomed him calmly and gladly.

"This has been a winter," she said, "while you have been away."

"It has been so with me," Christopher answered, "a long and lonely winter."

They were sitting together in the little garden, where they could see the bay and the ships through the spaces between the lattices; the moonlight checked the ground.

"I have a thing that I must tell you," Vasca said, suddenly, as one who speaks a difficult thing, and speaks it swiftly, lest the courage for it fail. "I have prayed, since you left me — as your mother taught us. Not in the glade where you found me once."

He clasped her hand, saying nothing.

"It is true I have dreamed of you," she went on, "but never as I did once, when the pain of it drove me to the wood."

He felt a vague alarm at the words. Had something changed? Did she no longer care enough to dream? He turned and looked into her face.

"It is not that you have ceased to — " For the life of

him, he could go no further; her look answered, and the question would have been as cruel as it was needless.

"It was only that you were not in peril," she said simply. "I may dream of you, when I can; but if you are in peril, the dream maddens me. I — " She put her hands to her face, and when she took them away again, she was smiling. "I wear the bracelet. Also, I saved El Capitan."

The Ancient Temple at Michtlan

"Vasca," he murmured, "I, too, have a confession. I, too, have dreamed. Never have I been so far, never so wearied with riding or battle, never so spent with watching, but I have dreamed of you, seen your face, heard your voice, been somehow near you."

He bent over her, and her eyes were shining, her face transfigured with impassioned joy.

"Did you never know," he whispered, "did you never feel that it must be so?"

"That it must be so," she answered, so low he scarce heard her, "that it must be so — never that it was so."

"Vasca!" His lips were on hers, and she trembled in his clasp.

"Never," she half-whispered, half-moaned, her voice

broken with the fervor of her words, "never again go into danger, lest the vision return and slay me."

As she spoke, there was a sound of heavy treading feet, and the gate swung open. A man entered, saluting.

"His Excellency the governor desires your presence, Señor Estévan, that he may discuss with you matters concerning his expedition to the Florida country," said the messenger.

For a moment there was silence in the garden; then Vasca stood up, swaying, her hands at her temples. Christopher could hear the laboring of her breath, and he took a step toward her.

"Tell his Excellency," he said, quickly, "I will not come to-night."

A word pledged must have its weight, none the less. With nine ships, in the month of May, 1539, De Soto sailed to take up the lands previously granted in the patents of Narvaez. He took 570 men, more than 200 horses, and all manner of supplies, seeds, implements, and the like, that a colony as well as a conquest might be undertaken. With him was Christopher Estévan, heavy-hearted but resolute. Vasca had clung to him at the last, begging him to stay — then through her tears she had smiled a broken-hearted smile, and bade him go. For this time her dread was not for him, but for herself.

Vasca was not alone in her tears. The Governor's young wife, Isabella, who was sister to Bobadilla, looked out after the retreating caravels with grief and foreboding in her heart. But she had her instructions from her lord; she was to govern the island in his absence.

From this expedition De Soto had decreed that there was to be no retreat. The ships were sent back when the troops had landed.

Never, in all their wanderings, had the adventurers come upon a more inhospitable shore. Here were no distant mountains, blue and mysterious, like the Andes in Peru. Only the white beaches, the forests, and the interminable gloom of the swamps. The Indians were few, hostile, subtle, and terrible archers. The march, from the day of the landing, was fraught with misfortunes.

De Soto's Bivouac in Florida

The first encounter which offered any appearance of open fight, however, proved advantageous in an unexpected fashion. Christopher, in command of the vanguard, came upon a party of Indians in an open space among the trees; they were armed, and were setting their arrows to their bowstrings when the Spaniards, ready, as was their custom, to strike quickly, charged down upon them. The Indians scattered among the trees, and the charge spent itself in the open. Christopher, at its head, found himself face to face with a man, unarmed, who stood wringing his hands and crying out, "For God's love — for God's love!"

Christopher checked himself instantly. The man, seeing his danger was over, sank in a heap beside the tree, too weak to stand, chattering and sobbing with relief and delight.

Brown as he was, and garbed like an Indian, Christopher now made out that he was a Spaniard.

"How, in the name of the blessed saints, came you here?" he asked in amazement.

"I came with Narvaez," the fellow answered, his words coming thick and indistinct, through emotion and the long disuse of the Spanish tongue. "I am Juan Ortiz. I have lived these years in captivity here, and have waited all this time for my own people to come for me. And here you came with a weapon, and would have cut me down."

"Let that pass," said Christopher, recovering his equanimity; "and tell me, that I may report to my commander, where the gold is in this country?"

That was the first question, the eternal question, of all the Spanish invaders; Balboa had asked it, Cortez and Pizarro had elicited fair replies to it. Narvaez had shouted it in vain. When the captive Ortiz was taken before De Soto he also put the inevitable inquiry, but from this man he got no response. The matter of real importance, the fact that the man knew the Indian language, came out later. When it did appear, however, it made Ortiz the chief counselor of the expedition.

Having found an interpreter, who was also a competent guide, De Soto was ready to start his conquest in earnest. He had come, as he had predicted, better equipped than any commander who had ever gone upon Terra Firma with like objects. If not gold, he was ready to take slaves; if there were no precious stones, he would found a city, and till the soil, making his plantations pay back the money he

On the Suwanee River

had invested, and the still greater amount he had obtained from old Vasco Porcullo.

His men were well armored, carried arquebuses and matchlocks, and many of them were well mounted. They had one cannon, a falconet, arranged for travel through rough country, and an abundant supply of ammunition; there was a considerable pack of hounds, trained to their terrible work in the Cuban jungles; and there was a great pack of iron collars, chains, and handcuffs, the equipment of the slave-catcher the world over. He had also brought a drove of swine, cattle, pack-mules, and a considerable stock of provisions. Among the men were picked mechanics, builders, and smiths; monks, lay brothers, and priests with sacerdotal robes, holy relics, and the essentials for the Sacrament. De Soto watched his little army march past in review, and congratulated himself: there could be no doubt of the completeness of his equipment.

Ortiz, the captive, was discouraging in the matter of gold, so they set out to the northward, without any special point in view, hoping to reach more promising territory. The commander was nettled by the lack of immediate signs of riches in the land, and he made no effort to conciliate the Indians along the way. The result was one long, continuous, wasting fight. Perhaps, after all, no other course was possible to him. He had landed in the Bay of Espiritu Santo, which we now call Tampa Bay, and he was marching where Narvaez had marched before him. The Indians are not a forgetful race, and such a march as Narvaez's had left them scarred and bitter.

If he failed in the finding of gold, he did succeed in acquiring some considerable riches in one transaction. Ortiz led him to a town which was ruled by a woman, and there, after some bargaining, De Soto acquired a great sack of pearls, many of them of good size and luster. But pearls,

after all, do not betoken the wealth of the land, so much as the patience of the fishers, and, in this case, perhaps the vanity of a Queen. There was some quarreling over the final arrangements in this affair, and the Spaniards were forced to leave the territory of the pearl lady without ceremony; in fact, it was only by the enforcement of chained

In the Environs of Tampa, Florida

captives to carry the supplies and the taking of hostages that they got away without a pitched battle. For this some blamed De Soto, and some Ortiz, for he was the only one who could speak with the Indians directly; but others believed that Maldonado, the general's lieutenant, was mixed up disastrously in the trouble.

However it was, the fighting became incessant; the captives came to be a fixture of the army; at each town they took new burden-bearers, chained them, and set free the last detachment, to carry back their hatred of the Spaniards.

They left the Savannah River country, and turned westward, the captives bearing the burdens. So for a long time the march proceeded, till they came to a large stockaded town at the junction of two rivers. Here the bearers, walking heavily after the advance guard, carried their packs into the town. The place was called Mauvilla, whence comes the name Mobile.

By some concerted action, the men of the vanguard were attacked while the rear was being disposed in the open street. It was late twilight at the time, and the Spaniards were forced to retreat outside the stockade, leaving everything in the hands of the foe, until the main body came up. For the rest of the night there was no rest, but incessant and bloody fighting. The Creeks were archers of the highest skill; they had chosen their ground, and there were among them many men who had been driven to sweat under the white man's tasks, and who hated with a wrath like the eternal fires.

Of that fighting, no man remembered more than the night and the desperation of it. De Soto, Estévan, and Moscoso led assaults against the stockade, and time after time they were repulsed. At length, tiring of the effort to force an entrance by sheer valor, they cut down trees, and sent in files of armored men with rams. The defenders, seeing that the town must fall, set fire to it, and sallied out in force, fighting their way through to the forest. The Spaniards, meanwhile, ventured into the burning town to rescue their supplies. The huts had fallen in, and everything was in the wildest confusion. Many of the packs were unhurt, but much of the personal baggage was lost.

Maldonado, who had commanded the van that day, they found stretched among the cinders, his face set in a scowl of the most determined malevolence. Under him lay the remnants of a sack with the arms of De Soto painted

roughly upon it; it was part of the pack which had held the commander's most cherished posessions — among others, the treasure of pearls.

One hundred and seventy Spaniards fell in that engagement, and after it they retreated till they reached the River Ochus, where Ortiz gained new information, and brought it secretly to De Soto. At the mouth of the river, within six days' march, lay a fleet of Spanish ships — his ships, sent by Isabella for his return.

The commander was torn between his unsuccess and his ambition. So far, what had he found that would serve his own fame? Nothing. Perhaps this, he reasoned, was his trial, his Island of Gallo. So be it, he determined. The next morning the army turned to the northwest again. Ortiz held his silence; perhaps it would have cost his life to break it.

The Valley of Toluca in Old Mexico

CHAPTER XXXII

THE WATERS OF SLEEP AND SILENCE

THE winter which descended on the expedition soon after the fight at Mauvilla was one of uncommon harshness; this was an unforeseen condition, and it appeared as an unexpected hindrance in the work of gold-hunting. The whole force went into winter quarters at a village on the Chickasaw, built huts, cut firewood, and organized hunting parties. The herds of cattle and swine, the stock of seed grain, all the extra impedimenta with which they had started so confidently, had been eaten or left behind.

They had already wandered over a great territory, wandered aimlessly, and without profit. From the Savannah country, across the broad land where the Gulf States now flourish, marking their way only by the fights and the crossings of rivers, they had ranged and found nothing. But they had begun to see how great the land was, and how far a gold-hunter might search fruitlessly in it.

Though they did not know it, they were not the only Spaniards who were then seeking fortune in the great territory of the South. Francisco de Coronado had indeed followed up the track of Fray Marcos, and had led an army to Cibola. From this point, which proved to be merely a collection of pueblos, not materially different from the villages of northern Mexico, he had continued onward across the plains of southern Arizona, and had visited the towns of Zuñi and Acoma. Here the party had divided, and Pedro de Tovar had taken a troop and marched northward to the villages of the Moki, the desert dwellers, who lived then, as now, on their rocky mesas in the southwest.

Cardeñas had taken another troop, and had gone westward to the cañon of the Firebrand River, which now is called the Grand Cañon of Arizona; and there, for a while, the men had camped, and gazed for days at a time upon that appalling, silent marvel of color and space and change. Finding no gold, they had indeed found a land of wonders and seeming miracles. This cañon so filled their imaginations that for a time they could scarcely sleep for going out to look upon it in the moonlight. But the walls were impassable; the waters below, which they could see here and there in glimpses, was miles out of reach; and the state of their supplies would not admit of tarrying. When they came back and told Coronado of it, he merely smiled, and all their efforts at description went to gain them a reputation for untruth.

Coronado fought along the Tiguex River, which is now called the Rio Grande, and after quelling the rebellion of

THE WHITE RIVER, ARKANSAS

THE GRAND CAÑON OF THE COLORADO (*From the painting by Thomas Moran in the Capitol at Washington*)

the natives there — for he had brought them all to acknowledge the King of Spain as their sovereign, — he started out on a long march for the city of Quivira. Here he, as well as De Soto, had a taste of the marching over the plains without profit, though he had less fighting to do for the sake of it. The country sustained him well, for he found great herds of bison — "cows," or "hump-backed oxen," his men called them, — and good pasture for the horses along the streams.

Quivira proved a bitter disappointment; he had passed beyond the region of the pueblo tribes, and come into the land of the nomads, where houses were not built, but merely tepees of bark and skins. Such a place was the boasted Quivira — mere wigwams, and about it there was never a sign of gold. By this time he had wandered up toward the center of the continent, though he knew it not; he had come into the borders of the present State of Kansas, passed the White River in Arkansas, and after turning southward, he arrived at the Platte River. Here he gave up the search, and started back.

It was while Coronado was in the Quivira district that De Soto, having broken camp in the spring, started westward again. There had been much scouting and reconnoissance during the winter, and the Indians had been less inclined to war on all occasions. Christopher had made a march to the northward, as far as the hills, and had found nothing of value, though the fact that they were approaching a mountainous land tempted him. Travel was too difficult, his party too small, and the provisions too scarce to go farther, and the men were feeling the cold severely. At best, there was nothing to report from this expedition, save that it was not good for the army to move in that direction.

Moscoso returned from a similar march to the westward, and reported that there was talk of a great river —

which might be Pineda's river, where the golden villages were — in that direction.

"I am weary of these reports of rivers and mountains," De Soto growled, "and I have faith in nothing. What shall we find in your river? Bah! There are streams and hills enough in Spain."

At this no one replied, and the council sat in silence, while the scowl on the commander's face deepened; he had not meant to speak so despairingly; there was still a great work to be done, and he was too alert a captain to let his own discouragement darken his followers.

"Go on, Moscoso," he resumed. "I had not meant to lose patience. It may be that the river is our goal — as I do hope and trust it may be. Let us move to the westward, then, in God's name."

Breaking camp, they were almost immediately precipitated into a clearly set and openly planned battle. Never till that fight did the Spaniards realize what the months had done; they were invincible no longer, though for the moment they were victorious.

"When we come to a city worth taking," Moscoso remarked drily, "let it not be too strong. We have not the armies of Alexander at our backs."

"Neither had Pizarro," snapped De Soto. His lieutenant did not pursue the discussion.

They came to the great river at last, at a place called the Lower Chickasaw Bluffs, and the Indians of the nearest hamlet were friendly, bringing in loaves of persimmon bread and dried fish to the white men; they also offered canoes for the crossing, but as the stream was far too broad to swim the horses across, the army waited until barges could be built.

It was well on in the month of May that the river was finally passed, and they turned northward.

De Soto Discovering the Mississippi (*From the painting by William H. Powell*)

After that, interminable and disheartening, came the Year of Disillusion. Wandering without let or hindrance, they found no place worth reaching, no spot to be desired, no hospitality and no hostility worthy of the name. If there had been fighting of any issue, or even the resistance of floods and mountain ranges; if the resources which had contemplated a colony had not been spent, or if the marsh-light tales of gold had continued to lead them on, they might have survived it better. Here was a good land, but there dwelt in it no single thing to raise the thoughts nor to arouse valor, nor to quicken any wish save the wistful longings of men who have been long from home. Only the marshes to be crossed in desperate patience, rivers to be forded, hills to be toilsomely climbed and great reaches of prairie that mocked the eyes and wearied the feet. Northward, till they came into the boundaries of the present

De Soto on the Banks of the Mississippi

State of Missouri; westward, southward again; and all the time the seasons passing inscrutably and the Indians growing bolder and more ironical as the army dwindled.

De Soto's temper broke under the wearing of the intolerable days. He was looking into the ashen face of Failure, and he knew it. The man who had fought so gayly in Yucatan as a youth, who had come to Peru strong and grave and sagacious and humane, now turned into a bitter and despondent leader of a cause that could never be crowned with success. He had played his game and the dice had fallen against him; Fate was stronger than he.

Outside the Great Temple of the Natchez

In May, again returning southward along the great river, they came to the mouth of another stream which joined it. The commander shuddered at the look of it.

"*Madre Dios!*" he whispered, "a river of blood!" He was muttering to himself vague words of fear and aversion,

and his hands were trembling violently, when Christopher came up with him.

There had been fighting that day and the commander was in heavy armor; he still wore his helmet, and Christopher noticed how damp his brow was and pallid, and how his cheeks burned in patches, though he seemed to be shivering with cold. The camp was even then being pitched, and the rear-guard was creeping up the low bluffs from the marshes below.

Christopher scarcely dared to speak of his general's weakness; in fact, there was nothing to be said, and little to be done, other than the mere labor of getting his tent set and a pallet for him to lie on. But he did offer to ease him of his armor, and got only a proud and curt refusal for his pains.

"Let be my arms," said De Soto, sternly; "and bring me a guide I may question."

Estévan obeyed, and the Indian who had led the army down the river was brought before the governor. De Soto swayed where he stood while the fellow was being questioned. The answers were all chosen to cut him keenly, for the man swore that the banks below were uninhabited, and that swamps and bayous made the shores impassable. De Soto, supporting himself on his sword, his face grey, plied the native with urgent inquiries about villages and cities, but got no reply. The man answered sullenly, almost scornfully, when he spoke at all. The general of the white men was sick — he who had, within that moon's waxing, asserted himself to be an immortal Child of the Sun. The guide's scorn nettled the governor, and he bade his men take him away. An hour later, he sent for him again, and the fellow was not to be found. He had observed something important to his own people, and had gone back to tell them that the leader of the invaders was dying.

Once within his tent, De Soto stood clinging to the door-flap; Christopher offered again to unarm him. The governor raised his hand in a gesture of authority. "Let me alone," he commanded, "am I not —" His voice broke, and his hand went to his head in a bewildered gesture. "This will pass — it will pass," he said hoarsely.

With that he toppled forward; Christopher caught him in his arms, laid him down on his pallet, and removed his breastplate. The sick man's heart was stirring sharply, and his body was hot to the touch. Within an hour the fever had come on apace, and he was raving like a madman, mingling in poor, despairing accents the glories of his former victories with the tenderest words of pity for the wife he had left in Cuba, his loosened wits sliding and shifting hither and yon, and his resolution broken and scattered to the winds. The river of blood seemed to be flowing through his tent, and beyond it his hot, dazed eyes beheld cities of gold, with long lines of slaves bearing sacks of pearls through their portals; these slaves of the phantasm he addressed in piteous tones, bidding them carry at least one sack of the gems to Isabella, for they were his own pearls; as he spoke these things, the watchers about his bed choked and their eyes brimmed with tears. However desolately misfortune had smitten him, this mad wreck was their commander, and they had loved him in gentler days.

The night passed, and the day like it, without change. There were signs of a gathering of the Indians up the stream, and signal smokes puffed here and there — blue heralds of the arrow swarms to come. The next midnight the general's fever seemed to abate a little, and his eyes rested again on the faces about him. To Christopher, who was watching, he spoke calmly, but with a great sadness of despair in his voice.

"I have used you ill, lad," he said, faintly. "There was a lady — in Cuba — you told me once. I should have left you with her. I have done you wrong." He could not have uttered words more grievous, or more poignant in their pity. Christopher shook under them, his tears flowing for the friend who was dying, while his heart took flight back to the woman he loved and from whom he was now so long and so dismally parted. A dread which he had felt before recurred to him now with a force that shook him. But he strove to put it away, and to give all his thoughts to the broken hero before him.

To the Castle of Chapultepec, Mexico

"Forgive me," murmured the sick man in a thin voice, "and call in Moscoso and all my officers, for it is in my mind that I am to die to-night, and I would not leave them without some salutation."

So they gathered about his bed, and Christopher raised his pillow that he might speak more easily. He first nominated his successor in Luis de Moscoso, and they one and all accepted the appointment. He bade them try to return by land through Mexico, as Cabeza de Vaca had returned, rather than go to Cuba in wilderness-built ships.

One by one he spoke with the officers, and begged them to forgive him for leading them so ill; and at last his voice

growing more faint, he saluted them all, and fell back, panting, and whispering, "Sleep — sleep — sleep."

The priests crowded away the soldiers then. The sleep he gained was never broken by awakening.

With morning came more signal smokes along the bluffs, and the Indians sent an ambassador into the camp to deliver a mocking message to the immortal Child of the Sun. They buried him secretly in the gateway of the camp, and the next day, with shouting and shrill mirth, they held a jousting over the spot, that the tread of the horses might conceal the disturbed earth, and the noise of the games might cover the sorrow of the men; all in vain, this masque of laughing despair. The forest eyes were open.

Moscoso bade them take their dead leader again from the earth; they put on him his best armor, and wrapped him in his richest cloak. That night, in silence, they carried him out in canoes, and lowered him in the waters of the mighty river, the stream he had given his life unwillingly to discover.

The Burial of De Soto in the Mississippi

CHAPTER XXXIII

IN THE HANDS OF THE INQUISITION

IN Vasca, alone at home while her lover followed his vain hope to the end, the blood that came to her heart was thrilling with warring things. It was inevitable that in her the faith of the forest and of the cathedral should cross and conflict. That she would be steadfast, unveering with any change of weather, was true, now that her heart was fixed; but that the struggle between her lover's faith and her mother's should be bitter, was inevitable, too. Her youth had been lonely; the years in the convent had brought her little in the way of companionship, and only the most formal and positive teaching — was it any wonder that sometimes she felt herself kindling to the old beliefs, feeling vaguely but deeply the coldness of the new?

In the first months after Christopher's departure she had been happy, dreaming of him, and spinning cobweb hopes and prophecies for their future life together. But as the months went by, and no word came from him or from the expedition, cold dread began to creep about her soul. She became moody and disconsolate; took to wandering by herself in the forest; and at times, when her hold on the verities seemed slighter even than ever, she sought help for her boding spirit in the old, clean wisdom of the woods.

It chanced one day that she was surprised in one of her reveries by the old lover whom she had almost forgotten, the nephew of the *intendente*. Few words passed between them, but he left her, scowling more darkly than was his habit, dark-visaged though he was. He had seen her kneeling to the trees, too, and while he did not catch her

words, his brain was aflame with an evil fire. He remembered other things that she had told him long before, things about her gift of vision and of prophecy, and a cruel smile twitched his mouth.

Padre Clemente was the man to serve his need; and to the priest he went, still in the white heat of his anger. Padre Clemente, as he was called, was a dark, heavy man, with close lips, fat and oily countenance; high in the counquisition of the Indies, as the commissishing heresy in the Islands was then called; and as lacking in mercy as his name proclaimed him to be rich in it. There came officers to the house, and Don Hernando met them, admitting them, and saying, in reply to their inquiries, that he had in his family the maid, Vasca Nuñez de Balboa; that she was the child of his friend, and had been reared under his protection; and that she had been properly schooled in the usages of the Christian faith. All this was accepted readily enough by his questioners, though they looked at one another when he owned that she was born of an Indian mother in Darien.

A Wayside Shrine in Peru

Then Padre Clemente informed him that the girl must be brought before him, to bear examination. Estévan knew what that might mean, and he protested as much as he dared, but to no purpose. So Vasca was questioned, and gave fair answers to all manner of inquiries touching on her knowledge of the Faith. But when they asked

about the visions she had, and whether they were such as a Christian girl might see without witchcraft, she turned away, and refused to speak. That was only the beginning.

De Soto's plan of marching back to Mexico by Cabeza de Vaca's route was not a success. For all the years these same men had watched the process of discovery, the gradual emergence of the continents they called Terra Firma from the unknown darkness, they were still in ignorance of the breadth and range of the land itself; they had touched the borders along the sea, and knew the shape from Florida to the Straits of Magellan, and on the west coast from the Cape of the South to the great peninsula of Lower California, that Cortez's men had rounded only a little while before De Soto sailed; but between the seas, it was all to learn, and cruelly hard in the learning.

THE GREAT ALTAR OF THE CATHEDRAL AT LIMA

Failing by reason of the lack of supplies, guides, and the strength to travel and fight at the same time, they returned to the River, and forged all their metal, and built brigantines. With these they went down the river to the Gulf, and hugged the shore, progressing so little that they seemed to crawl rather than sail, till they drew up at last in Tampico harbor. Thence by more confident and safer sails to Cuba, with the black news of their commander's death, and the tale of their failures. And one of them, Christopher Estévan, who had from the earliest days of his manhood felt

the Lure of the Wilderness, was now quit of the Lure for good.

He came back to Cuba afire with eagerness to reach home, and filled with the determination never to leave it again. The ways of the ship, the established look of the port, and the serene, day-by-day look of those who had affairs to attend in the town, all attracted him. His mother's embrace, when he came into his own house, seemed to have the peace of ancient Spain about it. The grasp of his father's hand was a pledge to quiet and authority and custom from that day forth. And yet, because he found only these two, a dread premonition stirred within him, and he spoke with a sinking heart.

"Where is Vasca?"

"My son — my son," said his mother, a vague note of alarm and pleading in her voice.

"As you are a true son of the Church," his father asserted, not daring to meet the young man's gaze, "I bid you not to ask that."

"I am not answered," observed Christopher gravely, "and I must know."

"I cannot tell you," the father protested, his voice breaking. "Mother of Heaven, have we not done our utmost? Have we not been left desolate? I am no heretic, nor are you. Then, they say, we must be content. Our Vasca had been taken before the Inquisition of the Indies. She has not been condemned, but we can find no trace of her without being ourselves suspected. Nor can you. This is your answer. Ah — my son."

The answer sent him to the one person in the island who might have power and who was, he knew, likely to be moved by his entreaties — to Isabella, the governor's widow. His service with De Soto should surely bring him something, and this was all he asked — that he might see

Vasca and speak with her and learn from her own lips the curse which seemed to have fallen upon her. The Doña Isabella was from home; in fact, was fast sinking with grief for the tidings which had so lately reached her. Christopher found her at her little villa in the hills, where, with a few attendants, she had retired. From her, as the highest civil authority in the Island, he obtained an order that he might be permitted to speak with the suspected person, Vasca de Balboa.

"Of what is she suspected?" he demanded of the stricken lady.

"A mercy!" she replied plaintively, "do you not know? She is a witch and most likely is possessed of evil spirits. Speak with her if you will, and if my word can compass it, because you served my lord. But I doubt if the authority

The Tower of La Fuerza, Havana: Here his Wife Watched for De Soto's Home-Coming across the Waters

will prevail. Tell me, señor, how it fared with my lord —" And with that she began her despairing cross-examination, while he, answering perforce, was all the time burning to get away.

In fact, the order was of little value so far as admitting him to any interview with Vasca was concerned, but it did serve to let him know more of her position and the danger in which she stood.

Padre Clemente, whom he questioned more ardently than was wise, hesitated at first to answer; but seeing soon that some one with civil authority was interested in the matter, he replied bluntly to Christopher's query.

"The girl you seek is imprisoned by the order of the Inquisition in the cells of the Dominican Convent. She is to be tried, and I have no doubt is guilty of abominable witchcraft, being possessed of evil spirits, and having a gift of second sight from the evil one. She is given to the charge of the convent at the request of the mother superior; but look you, young man, if you try to carry away this young woman out of their keeping, the Holy Church will have need to send you forth from its circle, and the brand of excommunication will be upon you!"

"But she hath not yet been condemned, is not yet proved guilty!"

"I have myself examined her," the padre answered coldly, "and I assure you that she cannot escape. There is no repentance in her, and much of wild blood that brooks but ill the gentle rule of the Cross." The inquisitor half closed his eyes and looked at Christopher between the narrow slits of lids.

"What is your interest in this woman?" he asked.

"She is the woman I love," said Christopher, recklessly, "and I know her to be true. I seek to marry her, padre, to cure her of her dreaming —"

La Fuerza, Havana: Here De Soto's Wife, Entrusted with the Governorship of Cuba, Waited in Vain for his Return

He paused with the priest's cold laughter ringing in his ears. With set lips he turned on his heel and quitted the room.

That night, alone in the darkness, he brooded, and remembered many things. As he thought, the whole matter came to appear as the fulfilment of a forgotten prophecy. Words out of the past came back to torture him; and with them came a sweet memory of a moonlight and the flower-sweet odors of the garden; and the warning words of her whom he loved: "Go not again into danger, lest the vision return and slay me!"

The Lure, and his own honor, entangled in the promise to De Soto, had been too strong for him. Well, they were both done with now, — the promise had been redeemed, and the Lure lay dead within him. . . . But if there was no longer a lure to the unknown parts of earth, there stood before him a duty more inexorable. This at least he could undertake, though it lead him to face the same inscrutable peril which Vasca now was facing — for his sake.

That was the bitterest part of it all. She had foreseen and foretold, and he not heeded. There had been, it is true, times of foreboding, dark hours of regret and anxiety, in the months while he followed De Soto; fears more terrible still had assailed him on the voyage home; but all these fears and dreads had been too late. His folly had too long endured. . . . All this could not help him now; he must live for what was to come.

He ran over in his mind the names of those who might serve him in so desperate a need. His first thought was Cortez; but Cortez was in Mexico; and Christopher knew that there would be no time to bring him back. Pizarro, man of violence, after putting Almagro to death, had been slain by Almagro's men in Lima, just as he stood on the

summit of his power. Besides, this was not work for a soldier, but for a priest; and he must be great in power, and greater still in courage. And at the thought, his mind sped, like a magnet, to the man of all men for his need, Bartholomew de Las Casas. He and he alone could avail in this struggle. . . . But it was one thing to think of Las Casas, another to secure him. The great Dominican was a man of diverse and devious traffickings, and no man in the Indies was more difficult to find.

THE DEATH OF PIZARRO (*From an old print*)

Christopher was told, on beginning his inquiries, that Las Casas had gone to Spain; that he was in Hispaniola; had gone to the Mayas in Honduras; was to be made a bishop; and some even said that he was in disgrace with the Church because he had refused the diocese of Chiapas.

Many tales, and wild — where might lie the truth? At last, questioning a young priest newly come from Jamaica, Christopher heard more directly. Las Casas was in Port Royal, whence he was about to depart for the Gold Coast on weighty business which he had as Protector of the Indians. . . . In Port Royal! and Christopher, with his keen need, in Havana! A voyage to be made, and no man could say what might happen before the fickle winds could bring him back.

There was no ship sailing as he wished, but at the price of much argument and of 200 crowns, a Portuguese ship-master was induced to alter his course, and to sail at once. Two days later Christopher landed in Jamaica. The man he sought was in the hills, visiting a mission, but it was said that he would return almost at once, to take ship from the north of the island. Christopher set forth for the hill mission, with such company as he could find, two fellows he picked up in the town, and three scarecrows of horses. The scarecrows served, however. On the eve of the next day he rode up to the mission, and descending heavily, he asked for the great priest.

La Casas had gone, the brothers told him, and was even at that time preparing to sail. Weary as he was, Christopher dared not halt; the trail to the harbor of the north coast must be followed without stay or pause. One thing he found, though, that did him comfort, — it was true that Las Casas had been that month enthroned as bishop. On the trail of the bishop, through the gathering and odorous dusk, he went forward.

It was early morn when, beautiful before him, he saw stretched out below the waters of the harbor that he sought. At his feet he beheld the poles of a small stockade, partly finished; but farther out, riding indolently in the cool waters of the cove, lay a ship; midway between her and

the shore, a boat, bound outward. There were canoes on the beach, and idle paddle-men; the thing was plain enough, it would seem, but Christopher found that it was not so. Money was needed to secure him rowers, and he found, to his dismay, that his purse was nowhere to be found. For a moment he stood baffled, then he took from his finger a gold ring; with it he gained one paddler; with him and with the threatened edge of his sword, he gained three more; and they were all shouting to the ship's men to stop, even while they heard the ratchets clanking on the capstan as her anchor came up from the coral.

Las Casas was on board.

The master of the ship was an impatient man, and he had already been delayed by the coming of the bishop. To him at first Christopher paid scant heed, being wearied by his long chase, and eager to tell his friend of the peril in which Vasca stood.

"This is a grievous business," Las Casas agreed, "and I fear me you have lost much time in coming for me. I have no authority, and those who are condemning her are enemies of mine as well as yours."

"You could find some way to compel them!"

The older man spread out his hands, and shook his head.

"They are greater than I in these affairs. I could do nothing, save as I might pray for her safety."

Christopher looked him full in the face.

"Yet you love me and mine, father?"

"More than I love myself."

"You do not believe these vile charges against Vasca to be true?"

"I believe them to be false; I know them false."

There was a pause. "I have no one to trust in, save you only," the young man said slowly, "and you must come with me, to do what you may for her I love."

"It is a hard saying," the other answered, "but I must deliver it. I am on the King's mission, and I may not turn aside — nay, not even for you."

"What mission is it that is dearer than this of mine?" asked Christopher hopelessly, his heart leaden within him.

"I have been made, as you know, Protector of the Indians in his Majesty's name. I go to the Gold Coast to see that those of Indian blood be kept free."

An Ancient Confessional in the Cathedral at the City of Mexico

In Christopher's mind shot a sudden inspiration. His eyes gleamed.

"You are to see that," he cried, and stopped, his eagerness for the moment choking his words. The next instant he was on his feet, pleading, arguing, commanding. A new chance opened before him, and he would not be denied. Still mad with his new hope, he opened the cabin door and called in a masterful voice for the captain.

"We go back to Havana," he said, when that worthy appeared, glum-faced.

"We do not," he answered briefly. But Christopher would not take his nay.

"But I do not know you," the shipmaster insisted, "and I will not sail one league out of my course for all your promises. As for my lord bishop, I have already done my best to serve him, and will go no farther in his behalf."

THE GREAT CYPRESS TREE AT CHAPULTEPEC

Christopher, with level eyes, set his back against the cabin door; and drew his sword with a flourish.

"I see," he said, "that I must take matters into my own hands. I give you one choice, and that only. You shall kneel to my lord bishop, and swear to him to take us both to Cuba without delay."

"That is black mutiny!" the captain gasped.

"Call it what you will; my need is black. But if you do not swear as I say, I will kill you now. Or if you swear, and afterwards betray me, I will kill you then, and the lie will be on your soul. . . . Choose!"

The captain leaned forward as if in thought, upon the table. His eye flickered up to the figure against the door; he gripped the heavy table with both hands, and lifting its edge, he hurled himself, with the table before him, straight upon the man who threatened him.

A sword is a fair weapon against a sword, but against a table-top of mahogany, a span thick, the most spirited sword must break. The upward flicker of the eyelid, however, had carried its warning. Even as the table crashed against the door, Christopher leapt aside; the next instant he and the captain were rolling at the bishop's feet. The young man was the swifter of the two, and the stronger. His finger reached the other's bronzed throat, and he knelt over him, his face hot with the shock of the struggle.

"Now shall you do my bidding!" he said between set teeth. "For I have willed that it shall be so, and you cannot live if you refuse me."

The captain let his twitching fingers fall to his sides.

"I yield," he gasped.

"Swear it!"

"I swear it!"

"You have but to do as I have bidden you," said Christopher quietly. "Take us now to Havana harbor."

"As you will," said the beaten man, humbly. He repeated his pledge at Las Casas's feet. Turning, he went on deck, to shape the ship's course for Havana.

"Thou art Protector for the Indians," said Christopher softly to Las Casas. "Thou shalt bring thy protection to an Indian maid who needs it most!"

CHAPTER XXXIV

THE DREAM AND THE AWAKENING

IN a crypt of the cathedral, a dim, candle-smoked room with low-groined roof, Padre Clemente sat in final judgment.

With him, their cowls shading their faces so deeply that they were almost concealed, sat his two associates of the

THE ANCIENT WALL AT CHERUBUSCO

Inquisition. The crypt held, besides these, only a few grim men, officers of the court, all of them churchmen of one order or another. There were no witnesses, for before this tribunal no one dared to testify, since to speak for a prisoner was to incriminate one's self; and to accuse was not necessary. Only the prisoner might, if the court pleased, be heard in his own behalf.

Before the judge's seat, facing the tribunal, stood a slender and pathetic figure, robed in black. Her hands were bound behind her, as by some last irony of power; but

she confronted her accusers with uplifted head, and with proud and scornful gaze. So beautiful did she look that even in Padre Clemente's iron breast rose a sensation of something like pity. It found so cold a house that it died as soon as born.

"Read," said Padre Clemente to the clerk, in his grating voice.

The clerk's voice droned forth the accusation:

"In the name of the Most High, and before this lawfully constituted court of the awful Church, which doth punish with fire all treasonous persons, and unbelievers, and in the presence of the Holy Inquisitors, I accuse thee, Vasca Nuñez de Balboa, born out of the Church's wedlock, but reared by good and Christian folk, that thou hast been unmindful of the truths of Holy Church; that thou hast dealt in sorcery and hast commanded the service of evil spirits; that thou hast denied the true Christ, and hast offered up thy soul in prayer to the abomination of the heathen unfaith; that thou art an heretic, and a witch, and one unfit to live under the Cross. Whereto have good

A Palm Tree in the City of Mexico

and credible witnesses made oath unto this court, and none others good and credible have come to deny them. Wherefore, in the name of the most Christian and Catholic Emperor, I bring thee hither for sentence. But that the utmost of justice and mercy may be thine, I command thee, if thou hast any word to speak in thine own behalf, let it now be spoken, or spoken never. Amen."

Vasca's dark eyes rested on the shadows of the cowls, as if she were searching them for human hearts. Her breath came and went quickly, and she moistened her lips, but for a moment no words came.

Padre Clemente moved slightly in his chair, and then cleared his throat. "I have this further, in the name of the Most High, to submit to the court," he said slowly. "This woman has still practiced her sorceries since her first warning by the Holy Inquisition. Within the past seven days there has come to me a young man whom she hath bewitched, and he has claimed that he, true son of the Church as he was, desired this abandoned heretic for his wife, because of the love he bore her. Here, in mine own sight and experience, is proof of her witchcraft. His name," referring to a note on the table before him, "is Christopher Estévan — a fellow who sailed with our lord governor."

At the name a tremor seized the hapless girl, and she fell on her knees.

"Praise be to the Holy Mother!" she cried brokenly; "he is safe!"

Two of the shrouded attendants came forward, at a motion from one of the judges, and took her by the arms, holding her upright. Her trembling left her, and she stood still, facing the court, her dark eyes lighted by a wonderful joy.

"Once again, before I pronounce sentence," the chief

The Cathedral at Havana

inquisitor said, in a hard, even voice, "thou mayst speak in thine own behalf."

"I have no need," cried the girl exultantly. "I have prayed that he might be saved, and it has been so done. I know now that my prayers have been good, else he had perished. Do with me what thou wilt, since thou hast it so written there, and nothing can change it. I am innocent."

LAS CASAS, PROTECTOR OF THE INDIANS (*From the painting in the National Museum of Mexico*)

The clerk wrote slowly, "She says she is innocent."

Padre Clemente spoke again. "Thou hast been proved an heretic, and the more dangerous to the Church since thou hast used witchcraft against good and Christian men. Thou hast been proved guilty of all these things, according to the letter of the indictment." He turned to the others. "Let it be by fire," he said, and they nodded. "Prepare to write her sentence," he ordered the clerk.

At the head of the short stairway, at the end of the crypt,

a door opened. The judges looked up. A man in the robes of a priest entered and came down the stairway. Officers of the court placed themselves before him, but he waved them aside with a gesture of high authority, and came on, stopping beside the prisoner.

Then Padre Clemente spoke mockingly from his chair. "Brother, this interrupts the work of the court."

"So I had hoped to do," replied the priest quietly.

Padre Clemente leaned forward in anger. "Las Casas," said he, threateningly, "begone. By whose authority do you come here?"

"By mine own, as a bishop of the Church." Las Casas held up his hand, and they saw the purple gem.

The other two judges looked at each other. It was all very well to sit in judgment on a half-breed heretic, but the Inquisition had many hands, and who was safe from it? might not Zeal itself err sometimes? and this man was now a bishop.

"Due trial has been given here, and the sentence reached," said Clemente. "Our court cannot yield jurisdiction."

"Brother," said Las Casas firmly, "your court must yield. In time there may be another hearing of this case, though I do not believe it will be so, since I know the maid to be innocent, knowing her history as this court can never know it. For the present I claim her, in the Emperor's name, since she has Indian blood. I stand above your court."

"This shall be duly reported to the Inquisition—"

"I am an old man, brother. I will answer to your law, in its own time."

The two judges arose, saying something in a low voice to Clemente. He also arose, and raised his hand. The door above opened, and in a moment the three inquisitors were alone in the crypt. Not one of the three believed in the authority which had baffled their sentence; Las Casas

himself knew its insufficiency; but no man dared raise his voice.

It was evening in the garden, and the noises of the day were still. From the hilltops, the two who sat speechless in the dark could see the lights twinkling across the harbor; they could hear the night-wind breathing in the trees, and the little purring of the waves along the sand.

There were no words between these two. They had been beneath the shadow of the wings of death, and the hush of that shadow was on their souls. In the house close by they could hear the voices of Las Casas and of Christopher's parents, but the sound came to them as through a sort of veil. They two, who had been Death's, were not yet Life's; meanwhile, close in each other's hold, they lingered in the borderland of dreams.

The Cypresses at Chapultepec

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